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**MANDALORIAN**

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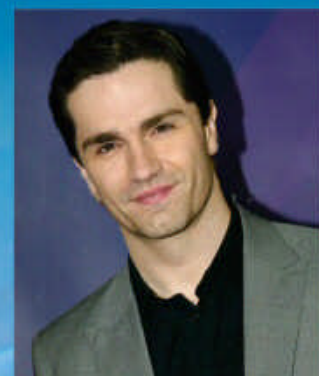
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COMING SOON**



ALL-NEW *STAR WARS* FICTION! JEDI SPECIAL!

# STAR WARS

THE OFFICIAL INSIDER™



INSIDER INTERVIEW

**SAM  
WITWER**  
UNLEASHED

**WIN!**  
ANTHONY DANIELS'  
*I AM C-3PO*  
BOOK INSIDE!

Exclusive  
First Look:

**STAR WARS:  
THE HIGH  
REPUBLIC**

launches here!

All-new story by  
Charles Soule,  
only in *Insider*

## VADER REALITY

ILMxLAB reveal the behind-the-scenes story  
of the *Star Wars* VR series *Vader Immortal*!

INTERVIEW  
**Ashley  
Eckstein**

Bringing Ahsoka  
Tano's *Star Wars:  
The Clone Wars*  
journey to an end!

**Knights of the  
Round Table**

Meet the writers creating  
*Star Wars: The High Republic*!

**A Seat on the Council**

Discover the Jedi Masters who guided  
the Order through the Clone Wars!

**+ E. K. JOHNSTON PUTTING A QUEEN IN PERIL!**





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## WELCOME...



"Whoa, oo, oo, ooo—Can you feel the force?" sang the British soul group The Real Thing in 1979. If you're unfamiliar with their disco-infused dance classic, search it up and prepare to time warp straight back to the decade that gave us questionable fashion choices, the hacky sack, home VCRs, and (thankfully) *Star Wars*. Were the song's lyrics inspired by the mystical Force that binds our favorite galaxy far, far away together? Maybe. But this issue of *Star Wars Insider* definitely is!

A fresh era in *Star Wars* storytelling is about to arrive in the form of *The High Republic*, and to celebrate we've embraced the light side and gone all-out on Jedi-related interviews and features (with a few Sith bits thrown in for good measure). The five authors behind *The High Republic* reveal how they worked together to plot the ambitious project, Ahmed Best tells us why he answered the call of the Force to star in *Star Wars: Jedi Temple Challenge*, we speak to Ashley Eckstein about returning to the role of Ahsoka Tano for the final season of *The Clone Wars*, and actor Sam Witwer ruminates on the nature of Maul. We also go behind the scenes of ILMxLAB's award-winning VR adventure *Vader Immortal*, and discover what it takes to get a seat on the Jedi council.

But there's more. If you can't wait to read Charles Soule's *The High Republic* novel, *Light of the Jedi* (in stores on January 5!), we have a special treat for you: Fiction is back in *Star Wars Insider*, beginning this issue with an exclusive prequel, penned by Soule himself. Can you feel the Force?

**Christopher Cooper**  
Editor

## MEET THE CONTRIBUTORS...



**Jay Stobie**  
[@StobiesGalaxy](#)

Starship fanatic and blogger Jay writes articles for StarWars.com and is searching for a way to reside full time in the *Star Wars* galaxy.



**Amy Ratcliffe**  
[@amy\\_geek](#)

Author of *Star Wars: Women of the Galaxy*, Amy is obsessed with the saga and loves to visit Disney theme parks as often as she can.



**Kristin Baver**  
[@KristinBaver](#)

Kristin was a card-carrying *Star Wars* fan before she had reason to own a wallet. Now she's an associate editor at StarWars.com.



**Mark Newbold**  
[@Prefect\\_timing](#)

A writer for U.K. sci-fi magazine *Starburst* and *Star Trek* magazine, journalist Mark is a proud Honorary Friend of the 501st and Rebel Legion.



**James Floyd**  
[@JamesJawa](#)

James is a writer for *StarWars.com* and assorted online geek sites, and enjoys trips around the world to visit *Star Wars* filming spots.



**Charles Soule**  
[@CharlesSoule](#)

Charles is one of the architects of *Star Wars: The High Republic*, and has written many *Star Wars* comic books for Marvel Comics.

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at Lucasfilm. Chris Troise and Eugene  
Paraszczuk at Disney.

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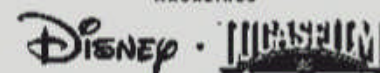
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# STAR WARS CONTENTS

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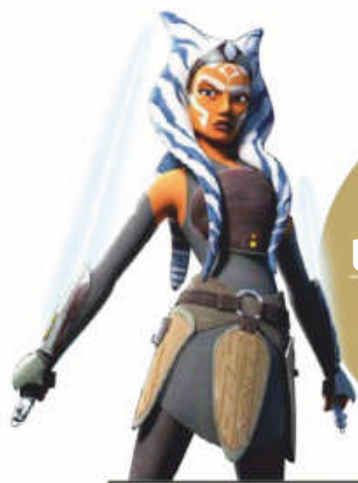
58

## *Star Wars: The High Republic* Exclusive Fiction!

A brand new prequel to the new *Star Wars* era,  
written by author Charles Soule!

PLUS *Insider* speaks to the five authors  
who helped shape *The High Republic* saga.





Subscribe  
to *Star Wars*  
*Insider*  
Page 46

NEWSSTAND  
EDITION



COMIC STORE  
EXCLUSIVE



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EXCLUSIVE



**06**

### Launchpad

*Insider's* regular roundup of the latest news from every corner of the *Star Wars* galaxy.

**18**

### Ahmed Best Interview

The actor reveals how he made the move from Jar Jar Binks to Jedi Master for *Star Wars: Jedi Temple Challenge*.

**24**

### Vader Reality

We go behind the scenes at ILMxLAB to discover how the award-winning VR experience *Vader Immortal* was made.



**32**

### Ashley Eckstein Interview

The voice of Ahsoka Tano discusses reprising the character for the final season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

**40**

### A Seat on the Council

*Insider* explores the Jedi Council, and the masterful Knights who earned their place among the Jedi Order's highest echelons.

**50**

### Knights of the Round Table

The five authors behind *Star Wars: The High Republic* talk to *Insider* about the ambitious new Lucasfilm Publishing project.



**58**

### Exclusive Fiction

The first in an ongoing series of *Star Wars: The High Republic* stories, exclusive to *Star Wars Insider*!

**64**

### Sam Witwer Interview

We get inside the head of former Sith apprentice Maul, with the help of *The Clone Wars* and *Rebels* actor.

**70**

### E.K. Johnston Interview

The author behind the hit novels *Queen's Shadow* and *Queen's Peril* on creating perils for Padmé.

## INCOMING TRANSMISSIONS

**38**

### Prize Giveaway!

Your chance to win Anthony Daniels' amazing *Star Wars* autobiography.

**48**

### Jedi Master's Quiz

Test your knowledge of the rogue Jedi of the *Star Wars* galaxy!

**76**

### Worldwide

Droid shelves, Cara Dune cosplay, and fantastic fan creativity.

**80**

### Image Archive

Industrial Light & Magic at work on *The Empire Strikes Back*.



**STAR WARS** INSIDER

# LAUNCHPAD

NEWS / BOOKS / COMICS / TOYS / GAMES / FASHION



## Beyond Black Spire Outpost

ILMxLAB launches *Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*

E

xploring the galaxy far, far away just went virtual, with the November 19, 2020 launch of *Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge*. The VR experience offers fans the chance to discover previously unknown areas of the planet Batuu and encounter a host of exotic new *Star Wars* characters, along with some old friends. *Insider* recently spoke with the director of the project, Jose Perez III, to find out more about what ILMxLAB, Oculus, and Lucasfilm have in store for players.

***Star Wars Insider:* Fans can experience Batuu in real-life at the Disney Parks Galaxy's Edge attractions. What does *Tales* offer that people won't find in those real-world locations?**

**Jose Perez III:** Some of our story takes place on the outskirts of Black Spire Outpost, but we are actually spending a large majority of our time exploring new areas of Batuu. You can see some of Galaxy's Edge through the window of Seezelslak's Cantina, but we decided that expanding the world was more important to us than trying to recreate

an experience you can get in the parks. We built a structure to support all kinds of unique *Star Wars* stories, so that we have room to grow.

***Vader Immortal* told a very specific story, while *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* takes a more "Twilight Zone" approach, in that it's a starting point for telling many stories. How did that concept evolve?**

At ILMxLAB we thrive on exploring new technologies, interactions, and stories. We wanted a structure that would allow





us to play in all the different eras of *Star Wars* while giving us the flexibility to dabble in new gameplay mechanics and interactions. At first, all the stories were going to be standalone and seen through the eyes of Seezelslak, our new Azumel bartender voiced by comedian Bobby Moynihan (*Star Wars Resistance*). After we started working on the project, however, it became clear that we also needed a main throughline, and that's when we decided to have the player take on the role of a droid repair technician stuck on Batuu.

#### **How will players interact with the world, explore, and go on adventures?**

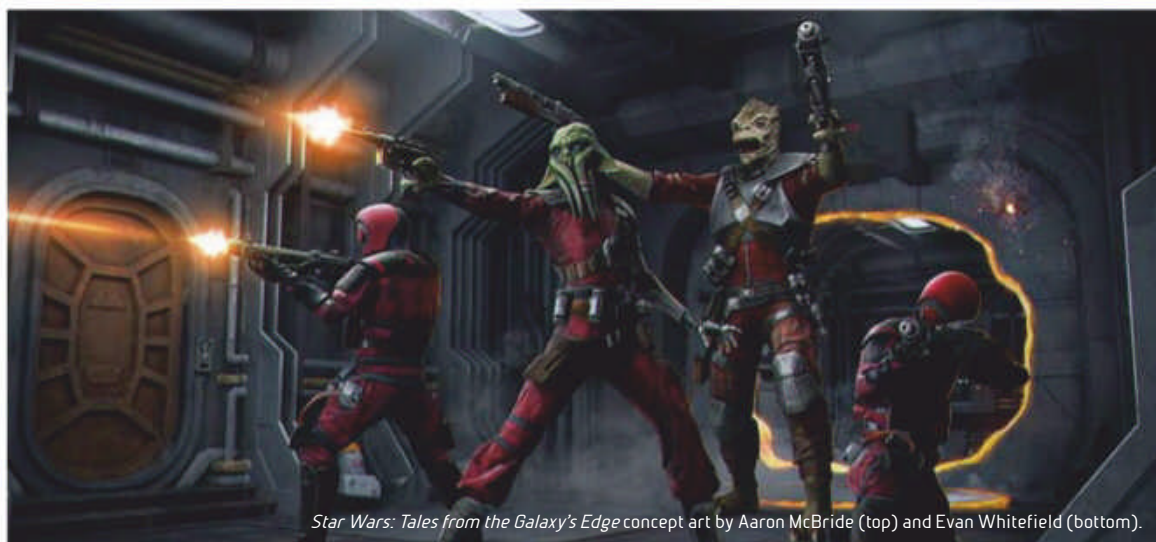
In the experience, players become this technician who has crash landed on Batuu and is trying to make ends meet. Players can venture out into the wilds of Batuu as this character, and fight Guavian Death Gang pirates as they try to recover parts from Mubo's crashed cargo transport. Or, if they want something a little less combat oriented, players can just hang out in Seezelslak's cantina, listen to the jukebox, and play a relaxing game of Repulsor Darts. In

addition to meeting iconic characters like C-3PO, R2-D2, and Yoda, players can also expect to repair droids, engage in blaster fights, and even wield a Jedi lightsaber while experiencing one of Seezelslak's tales.

#### **You've attracted some very well-known *Star Wars* voices to be part of *Tales*. What can you say about your incredible cast?**

Bobby Mohnihan as Seezelslak is really hysterical and brings a really great energy to the cantina. Debra Wilson (*Star Wars*





*Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* concept art by Aaron McBride (top) and Evan Whitefield (bottom).

*Jedi: Fallen Order*) chewed up her scenes as Tara. Ellie Araiza played the perfect Padawan. Matthew Wood (General Grievous in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith*) is the voice of Mubo, the droid depot proprietor. Mubo is straight up adorable, I think people are going to really love him and his little droid.

Rounding out that already stellar cast we were fortunate to bring on some real heavy hitters. Anthony Daniels as C-3PO makes everything feel more *Star Wars*-y. He is just full of heart and light. It was a pure joy working with Anthony, he's such an incredible actor.

And of course, I was ecstatic when we got Frank Oz as Yoda. Working with Frank is probably the closest I have ever come to actually training with a Jedi Master. He dropped so much knowledge in our voiceover sessions that I found myself pondering the meaning of storytelling for weeks after our conversations. Such an incredible talent. It was a true honor to work with this cast, some of whom I have dreamed about meeting since I was a child. It's honestly all a little surreal.

**You worked closely with Walt Disney Imagineering on this project. Was there any cross-pollination of ideas that might enrich both virtual and physical versions of Batuu?**

I love Disneyland, so working with Imagineering is a dream come true, and it continues to be a magical experience. We have a great working relationship with the Imagineers, and have worked on some amazing projects with them over the years. That strong relationship has really allowed us to get to the heart of Galaxy's Edge. Everything we build is carefully vetted by Imagineering and creatives at Lucasfilm to make sure we are staying as authentic as possible.

The cross-pollination of ideas and how *Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* integrates back into the park is extremely exciting, but I can't really say anything about it yet. I'm looking forward to talking about that subject more in the future. We really are just getting started!

**Learn more about *Star Wars: Tales from the Galaxy's Edge* at [ilmxlab.com](http://ilmxlab.com).**

## Have a Happy Holiday (Special)

LEGO and Disney+ celebrate Life Day with all-star animation

**N**ovember 17, 2020 was a day long remembered—the day that the phrase “Holiday Special” became something *Star Wars* fans could talk about in public without feeling a little bit... cagey.

Thanks to LEGO and Disney+, any memories of best forgotten TV specials we choose not to mention were laid to rest with an all-new celebration of Life Day, reuniting characters from the recent sequel trilogy and other eras in classic LEGO style. The special followed Rey's journey on a whistle-stop adventure through time and space as she races to meet her friends for a celebratory feast. Did she make it? Find out for yourself, as “The LEGO *Star Wars* Holiday Special” is now streaming on Disney+.







## Old Republic, All-New Upgrades

MMORPG Players level-up with *Mandalorian* gear

**T**he ongoing impact of *The Mandalorian* isn't restricted to the post-original trilogy era. Fans of the long-running MMORPG *Star Wars: The Old Republic* were recently given the chance to gear up with a host of Mando-inspired weapons and armor.

A game update in the week leading into the launch of *The Mandalorian*

Season Two on Disney+ introduced several enhancements to a player's arsenal, available to purchase in the game's Cartel Market. The bountiful booty includes the Infamous Bounty Hunter's Armor Set, Payday Blaster Pistol, a deadly Amban JP Blaster Rifle—as seen popping Jawas in Season One—and even a Desert Mudhorn Mount! Play the game at [swtor.com](http://swtor.com).



## An Unusual Mission

*Star Wars: Squadrons* short story takes flight online

**I**f you've been racking up hours of flight time playing *Star Wars: Squadrons*, perhaps it's time you took a break... and read about *Star Wars: Squadrons* instead! EA Motive have published an

original short story that sees members of Vanguard Squadron take on an easy mission for the New Republic. What could possibly go wrong? Written by Joanna Berry, you can read *The Light You Bring* at [x.ea.com/66343](http://x.ea.com/66343).

## Willow Returns!

Heroes come back in all shapes and sizes

*Star Wars* legend Warwick Davis is set to reprise his role as Willow Ufgood in a Disney+ sequel series to the 1988 movie, *Willow*, Lucasfilm have announced.

Directed by Jon M. Chu, the new series will be executive produced by Ron Howard, with John Kasdan and Wendy Mericle running the show. Set some years after the events of the original film, the series will take audiences back to the enchanted realm of fairy queens, magic, and monsters, with a host of epic new characters joining the heroic Willow on an incredible new adventure.





Paint models shown. Final product may vary.

Making toys:  
This is the  
HasLab way!



## On the Crest of a Wave

Crowds flock to fund *The Mandalorian* Starship

Seasons One and Two of *The Mandalorian* continue to be huge hits for Disney+ and Lucasfilm, and now Hasbro are getting in on the act with their latest HasLab project, based on the bounty hunting hero's ship, the *Razor Crest*.

Announced during Hasbro's Virtual Pulse Con in September, this new addition to The Vintage Collection reached and exceeded its crowdfunding target at hyperspeed, ensuring a host

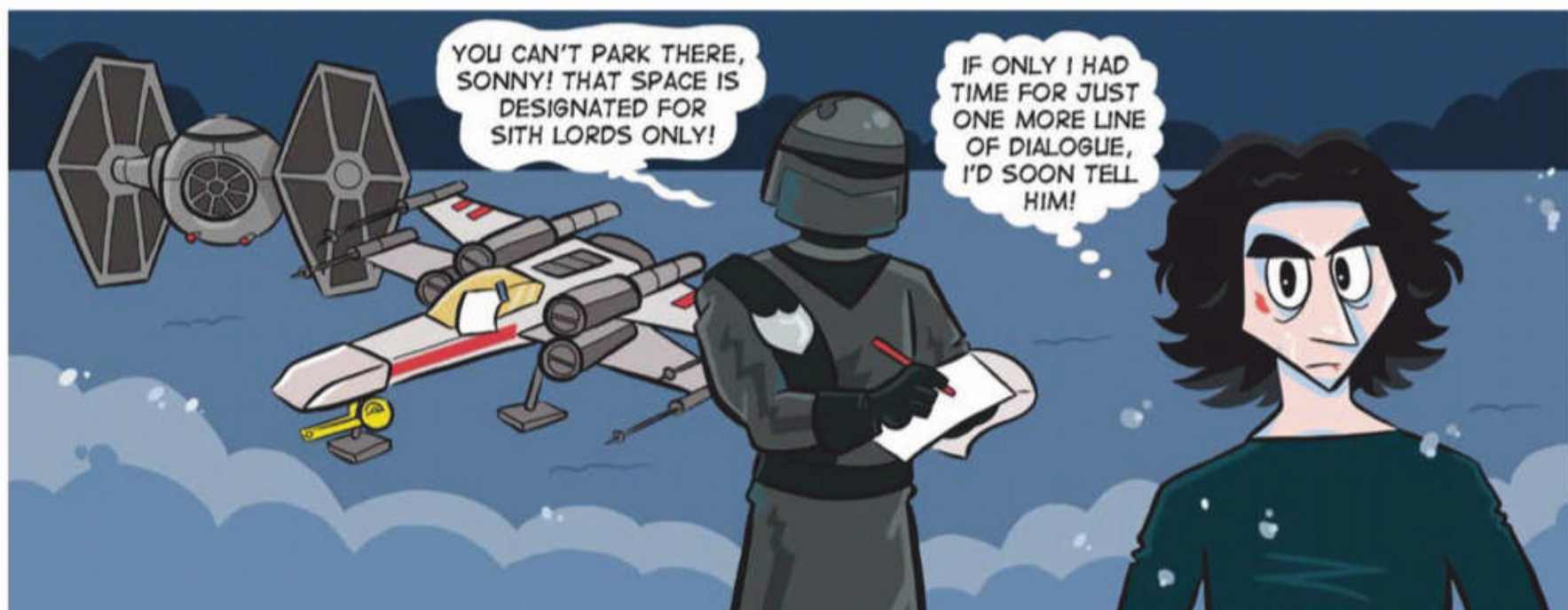
of extra features have been unlocked, including a removable escape pod, exclusive the Child figure with hover pram, and four blocks of carbonite containing Mando's most recent bounties. The ship also comes with an action figure included—the beskar-armored Mandalorian himself.

Scaled to fit the standard 3.75 inch action figure range, the *Razor Crest* will be as big as the show itself, measuring more than 30 inches long, 20 inches

wide, and 10.5 inches tall. The highly detailed toy features an opening cockpit with highly detailed interior, the Mandalorian's well-stocked weapons locker, a bunk area, removable landing gear, and opening side and rear hatches. Priced at \$349.99, Hasbro's The Vintage Collection *Razor Crest* is expected to be ready to ship in Fall 2021.

## THE LIGHT SIDE

By Jamie Cosley





## Deck the halls with boughs of Hoth-Y

Hallmark adds a touch of *Star Wars* magic to your holiday decorations

**T**he *Empire Strikes Back*'s 40th anniversary reaches a Christmas crescendo with a trio of Hallmark Keepsakes tree ornaments inspired by iconic moments from the movie.

Made from lead-free plastic and standing at 1.93-inches tall, the Mini *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) Luke Skywalker decoration brings the young Jedi's lightsaber clash on Cloud City to life and retails for \$8.99. Complete with a coating of moss fresh from the swamp, the X-Wing Starfighter on Dagobah ornament measures 5.77-inches in length and is priced at \$32.99. The Jedi Master Yoda Ornament With Sound and Motion rounds out the collection and allows fans to experience Yoda's signature movements and sounds at the press of a button. At a height of 4.6-inches, this Yoda piece retails for \$39.99 and will arrive to complete your Jedi training just in time for the holidays.

If you're looking for something more individual, The *Star Wars* Choose Your Destiny Personalized Ornaments allows you to add a name, date, or short personal



message to the decorative object, along with displaying your allegiance to either the Rebel Alliance, the Empire, or the Jedi Order. Crafted by artist Orville Wilson, the plastic ornament measures 4.6-inches in height and is priced at \$24.99.

In collaboration with artist Rodney Gentry, Orville Wilson also crafted the Miniature *Star Wars* Death Star Tree Topper that will add Imperial might to your mini-tree. The plastic and metal Death Star topper stands at 2.6-inches tall and retails for \$11.99. The tree topper, as well as the rest of these ornaments, can each be ordered at [Hallmark.com](http://Hallmark.com).

## The Empire 'Socks' Back

May the stocking be with you

**B**righten up your holiday with a touch of the dark side with the Darth Vader 19-inch Stocking. Celebrating four decades of *The Empire Strikes Back*, the seasonal polyester stocking features Darth Vader's glaring visage peering over a montage of classic moments from the film. Yoda, AT-AT walkers, Cloud City, the *Millennium Falcon*, and Luke on a tauntaun all show up on this ornamental piece, priced at \$11.99.



## Timeline

Important dates in *Star Wars* history.

**1948**

**Dec 21:** Samuel L. Jackson (Mace Windu) is born.

**1954**

**Dec 22:** Hugh Quarshie, Captain Panaka in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), is born.

**1978**

**Nov 17:** *The Star Wars Holiday Special* premieres on CBS.

**1979**

**December 18:** Emily Swallow, The Armorer in *The Mandalorian*, is born.

**1982**

**Dec 1:** Riz Ahmed, who portrayed Bodhi Rook in *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), is born.

**1992**

**Nov 2:** Naomi Ackie, Jannah in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019), is born.

**2003**

**Nov 19:** *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* is released on PC.

**2019**

**Nov 5:** *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge: The Official Black Spire Outpost Cookbook*, by Chelsea Monroe-Cassel and Marc Sumerak, is released by Insight Editions.

**2019**

**Dec 19:** *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) is released.





# Fiercely Festive

Winter wear to keep the wampas at bay

## CHILLY, CHEWIE?

Be as warm as a Wookiee this winter with the Our Universe Chewbacca Red & White Sweater from Her Universe. This 100% acrylic garment is adorned with a host of repeating *Star Wars* motifs, including an adorable Ewok, the faithful *Millennium Falcon*, numerous Christmas trees, stars, and snowflakes. And who could resist the lovable face of Chewbacca, framed by the punny phrase, “All I want for Christmas is chew”?

## AHCH-TO-HO-HO

Need something cozy to wear indoors? Then snuggle up in the Our Universe Season’s Squeakings! Sweatshirt. Featuring a snowy print of a freezing porg wearing a Santa Claus hat and red scarf, the sweatshirt is made from a blend of cotton and polyester and is priced at \$31.92. “Season’s queakings!” is emblazoned across the chest to round out the festive feeling. Both the Chewbacca sweater and porg sweatshirt can be ordered from [HerUniverse.com](http://HerUniverse.com) now.





# Mando Merch

The latest bounty on which to blow your beskar

## Mando Monopoly

Pass “Go” to collect your bounty

The classic Monopoly board game has been given a Mandalorian makeover in three brand new editions packed with galactic appeal. Choose from The Child Monopoly, available for \$19.99, which comes fully equipped with four player tokens depicting the tiny green Force-wielder; *The Mandalorian* Monopoly, available at most retailers for \$39.99; or *The Mandalorian* Monopoly with exclusive retro collection Remnant Stormtrooper figure (pictured right) <sup>A</sup>, which can only be purchased through shopDisney and HasbroPulse at a price-point of \$49.99. All editions are available now.



## You Have Earned Your Signet

Decorate your home like a Mandalorian covert

Regal Robot's Mudhorn Signet Plaque <sup>B</sup> bears the honorable outline of the horned beast's skull, as bestowed upon Din Djarin by the Armorer in *The Mandalorian's* first season finale. Measuring in at 11-inches tall, the cast resin signet is mounted on a wood plaque that is painted to resemble Mando's scorched beskar armor. Priced at \$74.99, the signet decor can be ordered at [RegalRobot.com](https://www.RegalRobot.com).



## A Camtono For All Clients

Bring order to the chaos of your workspace

Bounty hunting is a complicated profession, but keeping up with the admin must surely be even more complex. To help bring order to your desktop, Regal Robot have created the Camtono Desk Organizer <sup>C</sup>, based on the container that kept Din Djarin's valuable beskar bounty nice and secure (and possibly chilled) in *The Mandalorian*.

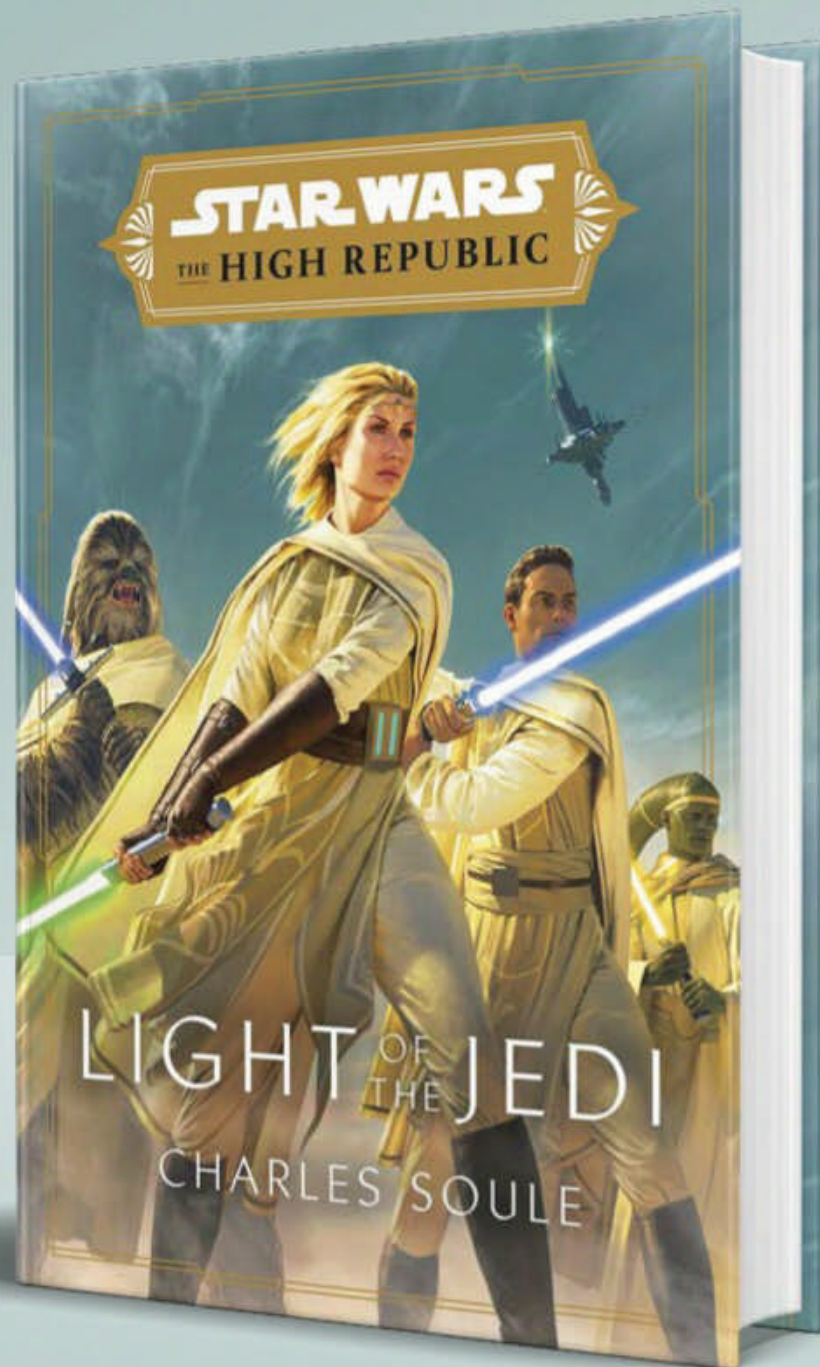
The hand-painted, cast resin accessory stands at over 4-inches tall and has a removable swivel lid enabling you to keep your possessions hidden inside. The organizer also comes with a black pencil and a resin beskar pencil topper to get your tidiness regime started. Priced at \$39.99, you can order your very own container at [RegalRobot.com](https://www.RegalRobot.com).





# Book Club

Mindfulness is the way, in the latest *Star Wars* book releases



## A New Era Sees the Light!

*Star Wars: The High Republic* begins at last in *Light of the Jedi*!

It feels like forever and a day since *Project Luminous* was announced, what with 2020 taking an unexpected swerve into the history books, but finally the Herculean efforts of five dedicated authors is ready to be unleashed upon the galaxy. *Star Wars: The High Republic* is here, lifting spirits this January with two novels and an ongoing Marvel Comics title.

First out of the gate is Charles Soule's blockbuster introduction to this new era, *Light of the Jedi*, which reintroduces readers to a galaxy far, far

away in a way that is at once familiar yet shiny and new. We'll also encounter a cavalcade of compelling new characters, whose stories we will follow across a whole range of titles from different authors over the course of this ambitious publishing project.

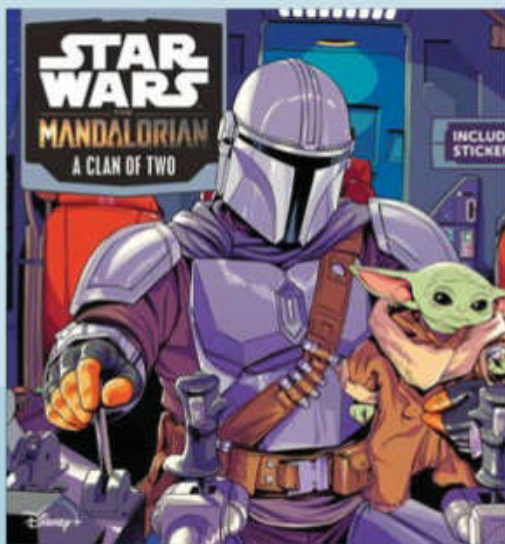
The High Republic is a golden age, in which the Jedi aren't the embattled warriors we know from the Clone Wars, but a more benevolent force in the galaxy. Similarly, the Senate leads a multitude of worlds with wisdom and respect. Peace reigns supreme, and

Starlight Beacon—a space station embodying the hopes and aspirations of the burgeoning Republic—is about to welcome its first inhabitants.

However, a storm looms on the horizon. A disaster in hyperspace destroys a ship, scattering fragments of wreckage that threaten to lay waste to an entire system. With billions of lives at stake, the Jedi must trust in the Force to guide them on the darkest of days. Published by Del Rey, *Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi* is on sale on January 5, 2021.



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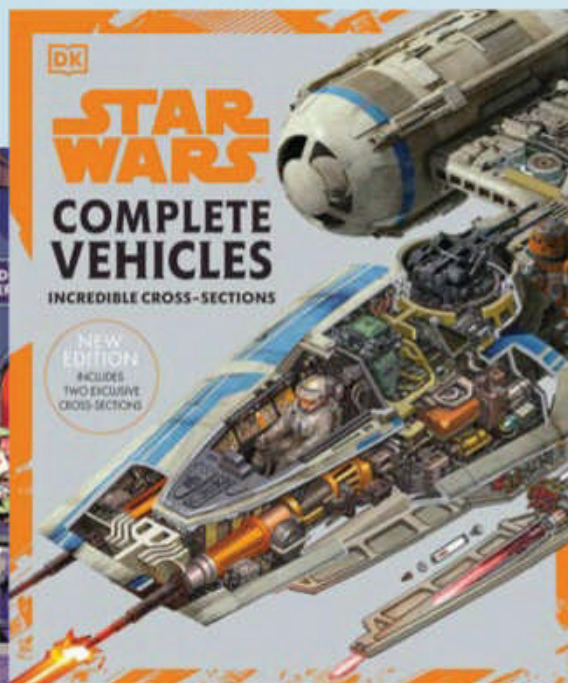
***Star Wars:  
The Mandalorian:  
A Clan of Two***

The first season of the Disney+ live action TV series *Star Wars: The Mandalorian* was a runaway success, with legions of fans tuning in to follow the galaxy-hopping adventures of its armor-clad protagonist and his pint-sized charge, known only as the Child.

In this softcover storybook by writer Brooke Vitale, the events of the eight-episode first season are retold in language perfect for new readers, accompanied by stunning illustrations highlighting the crucial moments that convinced a jaded warrior to adopt a vulnerable alien baby and become a clan of two!

Published by Disney Lucasfilm Press, *Star Wars: The Mandalorian: A Clan of Two* is available to buy in bookstores now.

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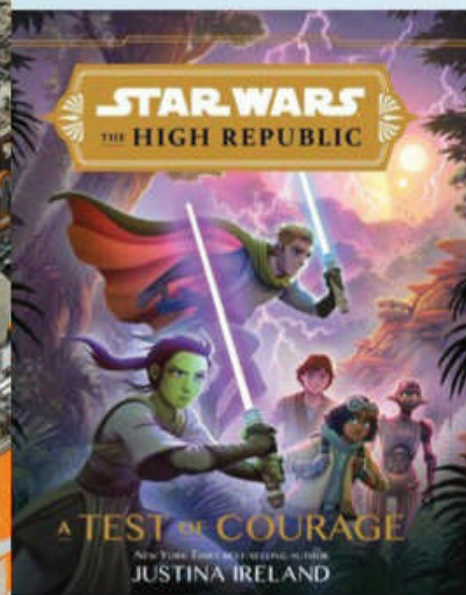


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***Star Wars:  
Complete Vehicles  
New Edition***

With the Skywalker saga complete, and the first anniversary of the release of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019) just days away, what better time could there be for a new edition of this fan-favorite guide to galactic transportation? This stunning, 264-page volume has been thoroughly updated to include ships and vehicles from every *Star Wars* movie, featuring even more of the detailed cutaways that have made earlier editions a must-have for every fan. There are more than 100 incredible illustrations inside, including the Sith Star Destroyer, the brutal Knights of Ren's *Night Buzzard*, and the inner workings of Rey's skimmer. Published by DK, *Star Wars: Complete Vehicles New Edition* is available now.

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***Star Wars:  
The High Republic:  
A Test of Courage***

Joining *Light of the Jedi* in stores on January 5 is Justina Ireland's Middle Grade novel, *A Test of Courage*, from Disney Lucasfilm Press. The tale pits a ragtag group of youngsters—among them an aspiring inventor and her droid, a Padawan, and an ambassador's son—against seemingly impossible odds on a dangerous jungle moon.

When sabotage strikes a cruiser on its way to the dedication of Starlight Beacon, newly annointed Jedi Knight Vernestra Rwoh finds herself in charge of these survivors, who've made it to the apparent safety of a nearby moon. But with something lurking in the shadows, there's a chance they won't last much longer—unless they pull together as a team.



# Comics Roundup

New adventures even longer ago in a galaxy far, far away, in this month's *Star Wars* comics.

## This Could Be Your First Step Into A Larger World

*Star Wars: The High Republic* makes its Marvel Comics debut.

Coinciding with the publication of the first two novels in *The High Republic* saga—Charles Soule's *Light of the Jedi* and Justina Ireland's *A Test of Courage*—this new era of *Star Wars* enters a visual medium of storytelling for the first time with issue #1 of Marvel Comics' *Star Wars: The High Republic*, an ongoing comic book series, written by Cavan Scott with art by Ario Anindito.

The galaxy is enjoying a golden period of expansion and optimism, with the Jedi Order at the height of their powers as guardians of peace and justice. But even in this time of calm there are dangers afoot, and every Jedi must be ready to defend the ideals of the Republic. Padawan Keeve Trennis is undertaking the Jedi trials, a step away from becoming a full-fledged Jedi Knight, when she is faced with a decision that could define her future.

"Keeve is a Jedi who never expected to be thrust into the limelight, yet the Force has led her to Starlight Beacon, with the eyes of the Outer Rim on her," Scott recently told *Star Wars Insider*. "The only problem is that she often wonders if the Force made a mistake. I wanted to explore how a Jedi might experience Imposter Syndrome, especially when surrounded by living legends. They know she's good, but does she?"



Keeve's Master is a Trandoshan Jedi named Sskeer, and their bond will also drive Scott's story. "Keeve and Sskeer's relationship will be tested to the limits, as the former Padawan steps out into the galaxy as a Jedi Knight in her own right,"

says Scott, before revealing that, "Of course, it doesn't help that the road ahead will bring her face to face with the terrible Drengir..."

Issue #1 of Marvel Comics' *Star Wars: The High Republic* is on sale January 6.



## Star Wars #9 & #10

The galaxy far, far away is keeping Charles Soule busy. Alongside his work on *Star Wars: The High Republic*, Soule's exploration of a more familiar era in galactic history continues in a new, three-part adventure in Marvel Comics' ongoing *Star Wars*.

*Operation Starlight* sees an elite team of rebels—including Lando Calrissian and Lobot—undertake a dangerous mission to Coruscant in search of an ancient droid, hidden in the Imperial Museum. Can they pull off this daring heist right under the Emperor's nose? With art by Jan Bazaldua, *Star Wars* #9 is on sale December 9, and issue #10 on January 6.



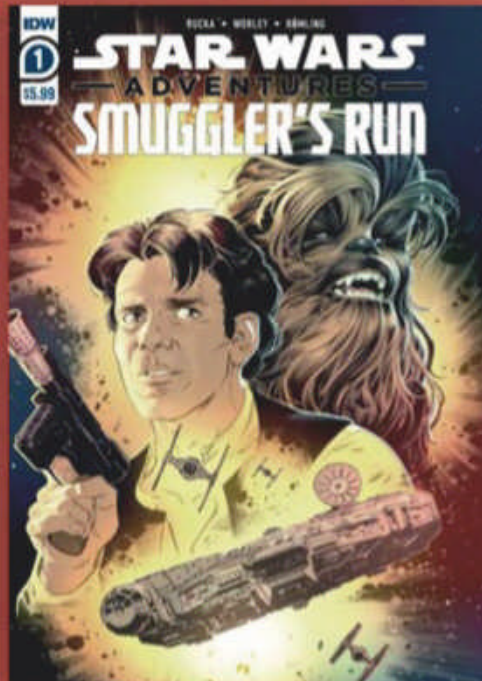
## Darth Vader #8

The ongoing series that launched in February 2020 continues its groundbreaking run under writer Greg Pak. Set between the events of *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983), Darth Vader is in possession of critical rebel intelligence, including the true identity of his son. In previous issues, Vader's failure to sway Luke Skywalker to the dark side of the Force resulted in brutal punishment at the hands of Emperor Palpatine. Now, a wounded Vader drags himself across Mustafar fueled by a need for vengeance, in search of his master's secrets. On sale from December 16.



## Star Wars Adventures: Smuggler's Run #1 & #2

Based on Greg Rucka's 2015 junior novel, this two-part mini-series from IDW Comics was originally adapted by Alec Worley in German for the European market, with art by Ingo Römling. Translated into English for IDW, the tale follows Han Solo and Chewbacca on a secret mission into the Outer Rim at the behest of Princess Leia, shortly after the Battle of Yavin—and they soon find themselves in mortal danger! The first issue arrive in stores on December 23, with issue #2 on sale on January 20.



## Incoming

Don't Miss These  
Upcoming Releases



## DECEMBER

### Star Wars Adventures #4

IDW Comics

**Writers:** Michael Moreci  
and Jordan Clark

**Artists:** Megan Levens  
and Yael Nathan

**Cover Artist:**  
Francesco Francavilla

## JANUARY

### Star Wars Adventures #5

IDW Comics

**Writers:** Katie Cook  
and Casey Gilly

**Artists:** Cara McGee  
and Ethen Beavers

**Cover Artist:**  
Francesco Francavilla

### Doctor Aphra #7

Marvel Comics

**Writer:** Alyssa Wong

**Artist:** Minkyu Jung

**Cover Artist:**  
Joshua "Sway" Swaby

### Darth Vader #9

Marvel Comics

**Writer:** Greg Pak

**Artists:** Raffaele Ienco

**Cover Artist:** Aaron Kuder

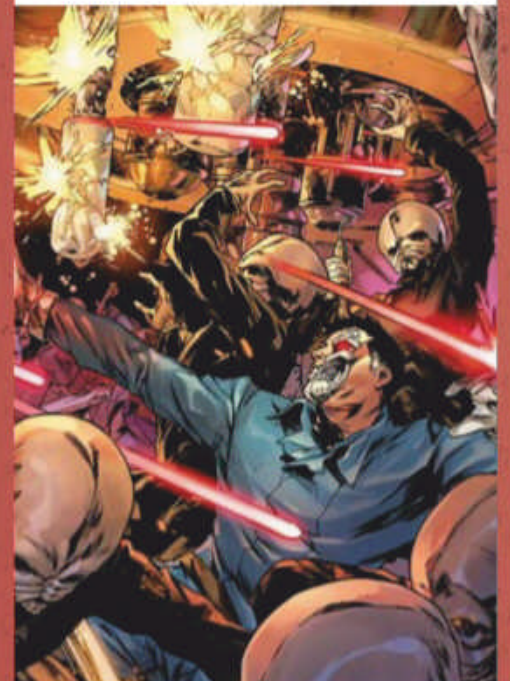
### Bounty Hunters #8

Marvel Comics

**Writer:** Ethan Sacks

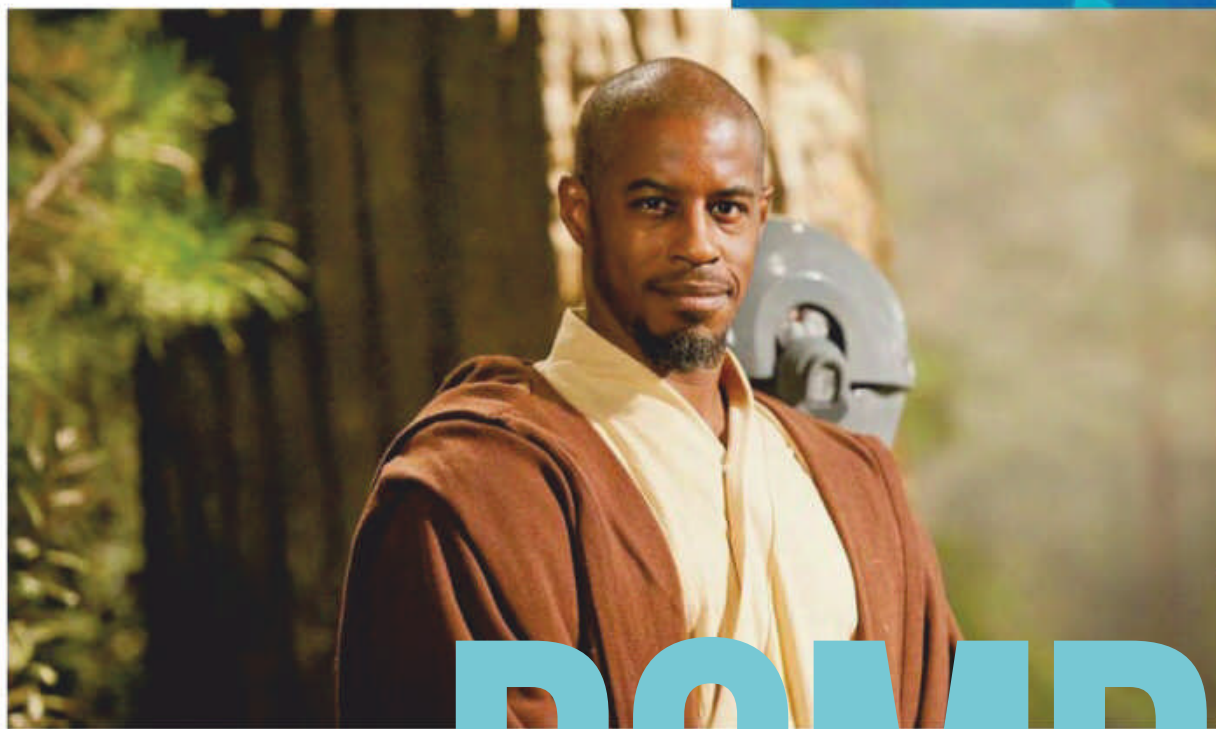
**Artists:** Paolo Villanelli

**Cover Artist:** Mattia de Iulio





WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD



# BOMBAD JEDI

## AHMED BEST FEELS THE FORCE

Ahmed Best first became a member of the *Star Wars* family when he signed on to play Jar Jar Binks in the prequel trilogy. Binks might not have been a bombad Jedi, but Best's new character in *Star Wars: Jedi Temple Challenge* certainly is.

*Insider* recently caught up with the actor to talk about the exciting and fun *Star Wars Kids* series, and to look back on his time as the clumsy Gungan.





“TO THE KIDS IT WAS A DREAM COME TRUE. THEY GOT TO LIVE OUT THEIR *STAR WARS* FANTASIES.”

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01 The inimitable Jar Jar Binks.

02 Best as Kellran Beq in *Jedi Temple Challenge*.



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**Star Wars Insider:** Tell us about your role in *Star Wars: Jedi Temple Challenge*.

**Ahmed Best:** I play the Jedi Master who oversees the Temple Challenges. I grew up watching Shaolin martial arts and kung fu films by the Shaw Brothers, and Gordon Liu movies like *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (1978), *Unbeatable Dragon* (1978), and *Return of the Master Killer* (1980). I love those movies and I always loved that style of filmmaking. *Jedi Temple Challenge* is a throwback to that. I got to see all of these young people who wanted to become Jedi Knights and take them through their trials. The Padawans that succeeded at all three trials became Jedi Knights. What was really cool was how much the kids were into it. As soon as you were on set you were in that world, and to the kids it was

a dream come true. They got to live out their *Star Wars* fantasies, and to see their faces light up made it all worthwhile for me.

**You performed a role rather than presenting the show as Ahmed Best. Were you happier with that?**

Yeah, I much preferred playing a character. A big part of it was folding into the mythology in a way that made it the star of the show. I love the mythology of *Star Wars* more than anything else. I love that I got to be a Jedi Master rather than me, because Ahmed Best is not a part of the *Star Wars* galaxy. The suspension of disbelief doesn't happen for the kids if Ahmed Best is the host. If they had to adhere to the rules of the Jedi Temple, then that suspension would follow. Excite their imaginations, and once you do that then the job is

done; just point the camera at their excitement and film it. I really enjoyed that.

**So how does Jedi Master Kellran Beq go about training these young Padawans?**

In the original films, to master the Force you had to have faith and believe in it. In *Jedi Temple Challenge* we had levels of connection to the Force, and the children could grow their connection and become stronger by taking the trials at the Jedi Temple. That is where they would work on their skills and cultivate their connection to the Force—all of the things that Yoda taught Luke Skywalker in the swamps on Dagobah. In *Jedi Temple Challenge*, the kids had a path and actual steps they could take to becoming a strong Jedi. It took belief. ▶





## CANON CONNECTION

Jedi Master Kellran Beq is a relative of Achk Med-Beq, a patron of the Outlander Club on Coruscant, as played by Ahmed Best in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002).

► When Jar Jar Binks was first introduced in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999), he was a character that entertained the younger members of the

audience. More than 20 years later in *Jedi Temple Challenge*, are you pleased to be doing that again for another generation?

That's one of the reasons why I said yes to doing the show. Kids always gave me the positivity I looked for when I was playing Jar Jar. I always got great responses from children, so I wanted to give something back to them. Live-action *Star Wars* is

very much for the millennials and the Gen X-ers like myself, and the younger kids go to the animated series like *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-2014, 2020) and *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018) to get their dose of *Star Wars*, or they watch *The Phantom Menace*. George Lucas was really about the kids and making sure they were fans of the movies. He would say that if you get the kids, then you have fans for the next 20 years.

**How did the role of Jar Jar Binks originally come your way?**

I was in *Stomp* in San Francisco, and Robin Gurland, who was the

casting director for *The Phantom Menace*, was in the audience. She asked me to audition for Jar Jar, and I made it all the way through.

**Performing amidst a very active cast, what was it about you that stood out to Gurland?**

I don't know, that's a question that I've never asked her. Originally, I was just supposed to be Jar Jar's moves, and *Stomp* is a very movement-oriented show, so it must have been something to that effect.

**How did you assimilate the more technical aspects of becoming Jar Jar—wearing full motion-capture gear and projecting an eyeline for the other actors that was a foot above your head?**

For me, it wasn't that difficult—but for everybody else it was probably a lot harder! They had to constantly focus on Jar Jar's eyes and not mine.

What I really loved was going over to Industrial Light & Magic after principal photography was completed, where it was just me, George Lucas, Rob Coleman, and John Knoll. That was when we really figured out the whole motion-capture process, which is still how things are done to this day. Solving those problems and collaborating in that way was the most exciting part to me.



03 Beq (Best) with droid friends AD-3 and LX-R5.

04 AD-3, played by Mary Holland and Gordon Tarpley.

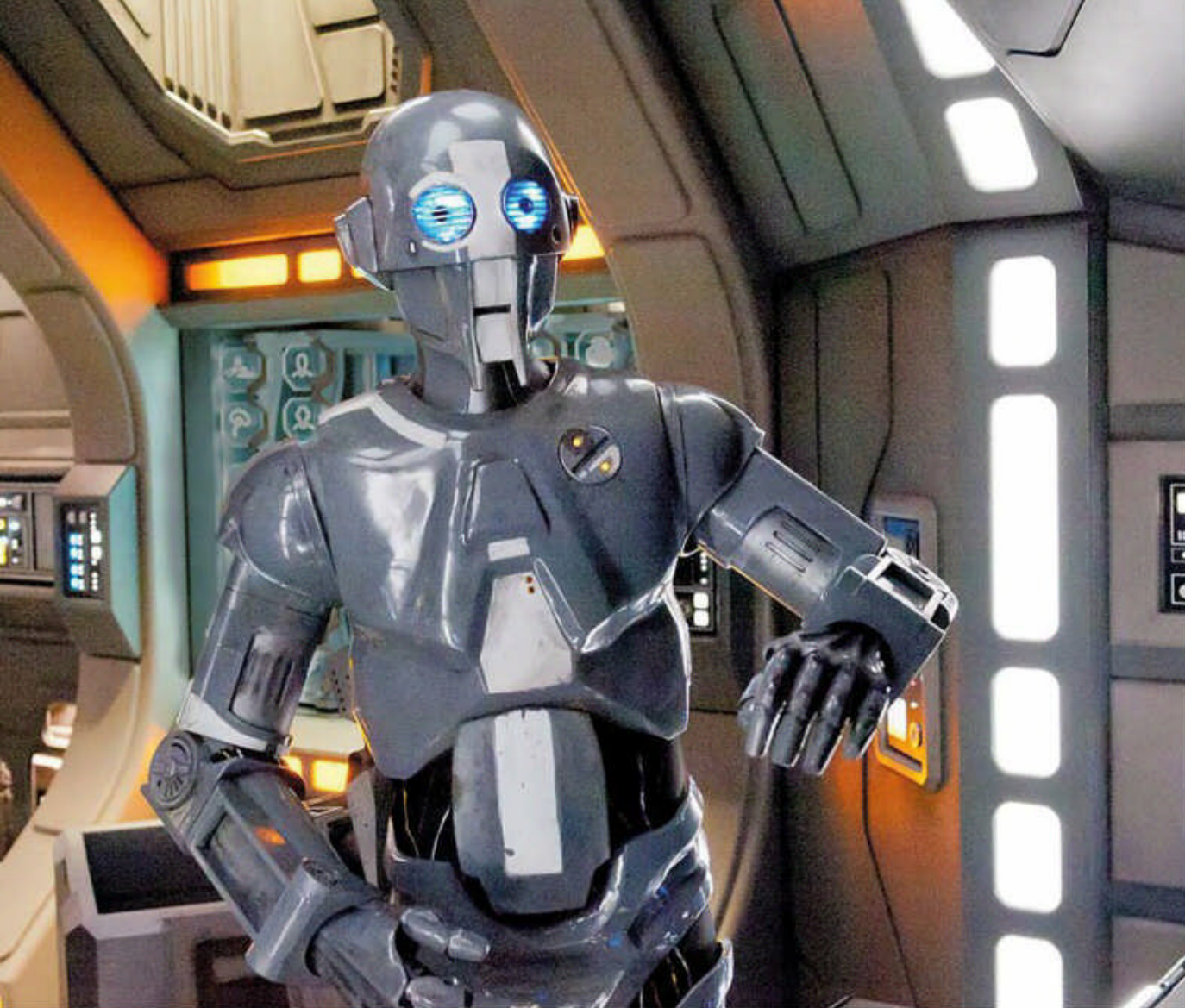
05 Padawans engage in physical trials...

06 ...and mental challenges in their quest to become Jedi Knights.



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**“IN JEDI TEMPLE CHALLENGE, THE KIDS HAD A PATH TO BECOMING A STRONG JEDI, ACTUAL STEPS THEY COULD TAKE. IT TOOK BELIEF.”**

**How does it feel to have been involved in the birth of such techniques of bringing a cinematic character to life?**

Honestly, there needs to be more said about the army of people behind making Jar Jar, because it wasn't just George and me. There were all the engineers at ILM; Rob Coleman, who is just a phenomenal artist; Terry Whitlatch who designed the character; and John Knoll. Everybody who was involved in it at the time pioneered the process. If you think about it, a lot of modern technique in filmmaking was being tried out in *The Phantom Menace*. It really is an historical piece of work, and it's a very strong piece of art because of all the techniques it combined.

**Do you feel that *The Phantom Menace* is finally getting the respect it deserves?**

It's getting to be that way, but I still don't think it gets enough credit, simply as a work of art.

You can track filmmaking to what came before *The Phantom Menace* and then what came afterward. Cinema was never the same. You don't have very many milestones in art like that. I don't think it gets enough recognition for the courage it took for George Lucas to say he was going to do it *and* fund it himself. He put his faith in the process, and there hasn't been a movie like it since.

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## UP TO THE CHALLENGE

*Star Wars Jedi Temple Challenge* is an all-action adventure game show that follows three teams of young Padawans as they are tested in the core Jedi principles of strength, knowledge, and bravery. Having faced thrilling trials and fun obstacles, the winners are awarded the rank of Jedi Knight!

### CREDITS

**Ahmed Best** as Jedi Master Kelleran Beq

**Mary Holland** as AD-3

Developed and Co-Executive Produced by **Scott Bromley** and **Steve Blank**

Executive Producers **Mickey Capoferri** and **Christine Beebe**

Available at [StarWarsKids.com](http://StarWarsKids.com) and the *Star Wars Kids* YouTube channel.



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► You mention courage. To put yourself out there with a digitally realized character like Jar Jar, what are your feelings on inhabiting a character that caused such a diverse reaction?

While I was doing it, I didn't think about that, because I was excited to be there and creating this thing. The audience wasn't part of the process, so when they got hold of it, they didn't know how much work went into creating Jar Jar.

1999 was a very interesting time, and there was a lot of change about to happen. The rumor at the time was that characters like Jar Jar would completely replace live-action actors, and the industry didn't want to change, so the narrative that went out was the one that created the backlash. Now they're creating a digital James Dean and that same backlash that happened during *The Phantom Menace* is happening again. The thing that everyone's afraid of is that performers are going to be resurrected and put in movies posthumously. But you'll always need an actor, so start talking about the actor, start crediting the actor. Start talking about the symbiotic process behind it, because that's what's exciting.

**How do you look at Jar Jar onscreen? Is he essentially digital makeup, and you are Jar Jar?**

No, I see it as a combination, and I think that is how we need to look at digital characters. It's happening more now, and I think it's something that Peter Jackson did very well with Gollum [in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy]. Peter constantly talked about Andy Serkis

and how great an actor he was, and put his name in every conversation when it came to Gollum. That's really what normalised the process, so now when we see Josh Brolin as Thanos or Bradley Cooper as Rocket Raccoon [in the Marvel movies], we're okay with that.

When we recognize that it's a hybrid process that doesn't just involve the actors but also the animators, the digital artists, the conceptualisers, and the programmers, then it becomes easier to accept. I saw it back then as people have started to see these characters now.

**That must be how Anthony Daniels felt when no one talked about there being an actor in the C-3PO suit on *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977).**

Or Frank Oz as Yoda. Frank doesn't get credited as Yoda as much as he should, yet he created an iconic character that everyone talks about. Everyone sees Yoda; he's in everybody's lexicon in every culture, but when it comes to the Jedi Master you don't see Frank, you see Yoda. I talked to him a lot about that, and he's cool with it. He said it always happens that way and I think that audiences

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**"I GENERALLY MOVE A LOT AS AN ACTOR, BUT EVERYTHING THEY HAD JAR JAR DOING IN *THE CLONE WARS* WAS SO WILD."**

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- 07 An exuberant Jar Jar Binks in *The Phantom Menace* (1999).
- 08 Jar Jar's first encounter with a Jedi (Liam Neeson as Qui-Gon Jinn) in *The Phantom Menace*.
- 09 The fate of the galaxy rests on Jar Jar's kind nature in *Attack of the Clones* (2002).
- 10 Best enjoyed playing Jar Jar's maturing character in *Attack of the Clones*.
- 11 A less than joyful Jar Jar in *Revenge of the Sith* (2005).



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are now so sophisticated they can understand the process so much better. One thing that we can't do as creators is think about our audience as uninformed—the audience is incredibly informed. All the information is out there, and people want to go on the ride, so including them in the process is much more important now than it ever has been.

**Jar Jar went from a simple life on Naboo to being an influential senator. How did you enjoy the progression of the character?**

It was good, although I wish Jar Jar had more to do in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005). There was a deleted scene that I did with Ian McDiarmid that didn't make it into the movie, and it was a good tie-up for the character. I liked the maturing aspect of Jar Jar.

**When you were voicing Jar Jar in *The Clone Wars*, were you moving around?, He seems to be a very fidgety character?**

Yeah, I generally move around a lot as an actor, but everything they had Jar Jar doing in *The Clone Wars* was so wild. I remember there was one scene where Jar Jar was juggling plates. Dave Filoni was directing, and I was actually juggling in the room to make it sound like I was doing something close to what was happening on screen.

**Is Jar Jar a character you would ever consider returning to?**

I don't know. Previously I would have said no, but now I'm not sure. I played him in *The Clone Wars*, which was fun, but now there's a new generation of characters and I think we have to make way and let them tell the stories.

**Despite the ups and downs, are you glad you made the decision to get involved in *Star Wars*?**

Yeah, absolutely. The friendships that I made have been life-long, and the education I got along the way was amazing. I used to drive to work with George every day, and just sitting around and being in his presence and talking with him was my film school.

I was only 24 years old at the time and I would never have got that kind of education had I not done *The Phantom Menace* that early in my career. I'm generally a curious person and I learned by watching, by experiencing, and by asking questions. To be in that environment with all those creative people, learning so much from everyone, was a once in a lifetime experience. You can't duplicate that anywhere else. 🙌





# VR= VADER





# REALITY

ILMxLAB's multi-award-winning VR experience *Vader Immortal: A Star Wars VR Series* offers fans the opportunity to step inside the world of *Star Wars* and go toe-to-toe with the Sith Lord himself—by way of VR headsets Oculus Quest, Oculus Rift, or PlayStation VR. Executive creative producer Mark S. Miller and Director Ben Snow reveal to *Star Wars Insider* how the project came together.

WORDS: KRISTIN BAVER



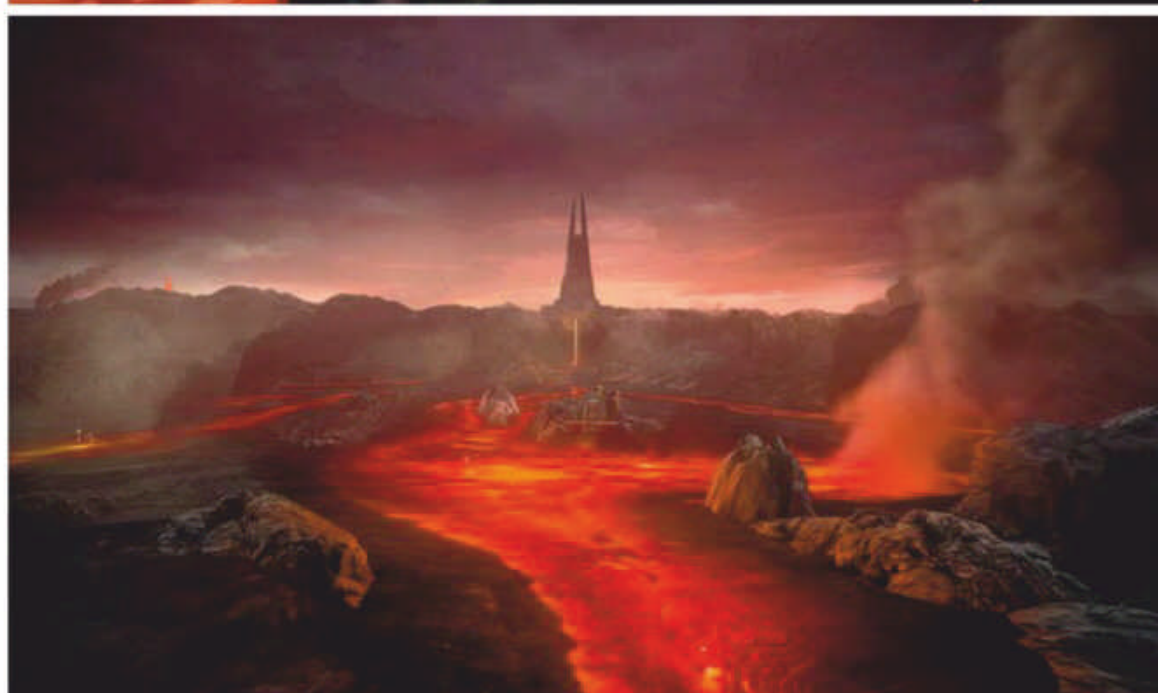
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y the time Darth Vader strides into view, looking down upon you through his life-sustaining mask, the outside world has fallen away. You've forgotten that the menacing Sith Lord is a painstakingly detailed piece of virtual reality, a simulation brought to life by the creative minds at ILMxLAB. You believe that you are standing on Mustafar, even though you are really somewhere quite safe with a VR headset strapped to your face, delivering the immersive world of *Vader Immortal*.

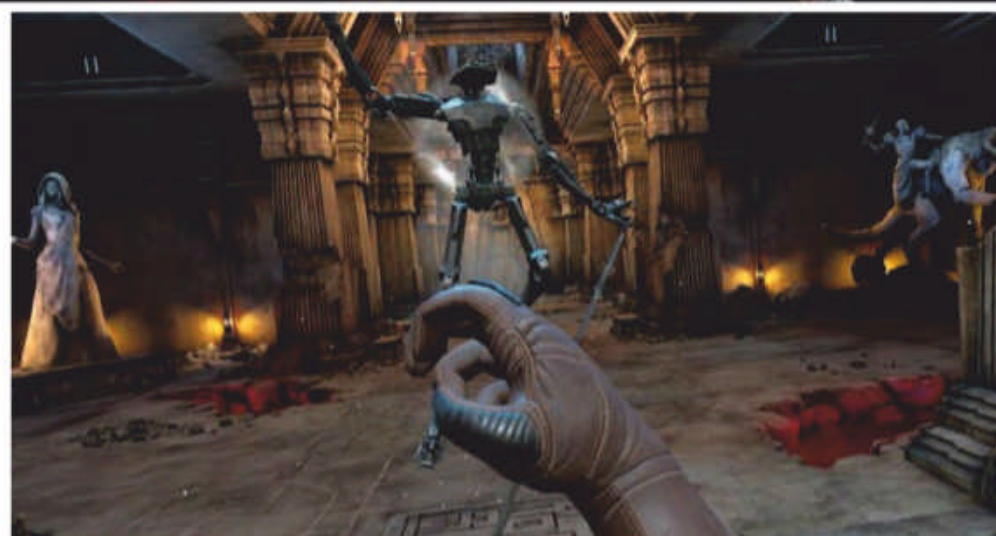
That's the magnificence of the experience, and for the creators who spent years hatching ideas for the narrative storyline and bringing it to life, the biggest challenge. Because if encountering Vader doesn't strike fear into the hearts of users, unequivocally selling the idea that you've been transported into the *Star Wars* galaxy to stand before Darth Vader himself for a special mission, then what they've been trying to accomplish with this amazing chapter of *Star Wars* adventures will have failed.

It all started back in 2015, the year ILMxLAB, Lucasfilm's immersive entertainment studio, was

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established. Executive Creative Producer Mark S. Miller and the team were exploring an immersive, narrative story to be told on the new platform. Unlike the wildly popular *Star Wars* films and animated series, a virtual reality experience had to bring the galaxy home on a whole new level. And much different than the legion of videogames that came before it, this story wasn't about tallying hit points or winning a conflict. The goal was to step inside a *Star Wars* story, interacting with the world as events unfold like an actor on a digital set, and playing a role through cutting-edge technology that meant a simple headset and two controllers could beam you directly onto the bridge of a ship or the fiery surface of Mustafar.

In those early days, Miller says the creators explored ways to tie-in to *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016), which was in production at the time. Initially, they considered taking a scene from the film and expanding on it, but hitching the idea directly to a specific moment for a movie still in production was risky. "It would be less compelling if that scene ended up on the cutting room floor," Miller says. From the beginning, the focus quickly landed on a story involving Darth Vader. "If we could do something in VR, an immersive narrative tale, what story would we want to tell?" they asked themselves. "We wrote a lot of other characters on the white board," the producer admits, but it was





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**“You get instructed in using the ways of the Force by Vader himself, which we thought was totally cool.”**

**MARK S. MILLER,  
EXECUTIVE CREATIVE PRODUCER**

links you to the Mustafarian natives and a power within the Force that’s just been awakened. And that’s only the end of Episode I!

The three-part story, told in the same narrative structure as a feature film and playing out over about two hours, takes you deep into the caverns of Mustafar, where a frightful darkghast tries to turn you into a meal, and sees you both being trained by Vader and then betrayed by the calculating Sith Lord, forcing you to take your new-found Force skills into battle against one of the greatest Force-using warriors the galaxy has ever known. “You get instructed in using the ways of the Force by Vader himself, which we thought was totally cool,” Miller confirms.

With the outline for the story finally in place, it was over to the creative team to make it a reality. The special effects used to create the immersive virtual environments are like nothing that have been seen before. The experience storytellers originally considered allowed for the narrative to unfold with users acting more as a galactic fly on the castle wall, but they happily created some early tests using the first-person construct as an alternative option. It soon became obvious that there was a clear winner in the approach they should take. “Seeing the very first tests we did and being able to even stand in the room with Vader was compelling for everybody we put in there,” Miller says, so Narrative Designer Mohen Leo and Director Ben Snow settled on the more direct approach. “We did that first test and everybody was like, ‘This is what we have to do.’”

To fulfill fans’ long-held dreams of lightsaber combat, a complimentary mode was developed in the shape of the Lightsaber Dojo, which allows users to break with the narrative format and clock up hours upon hours leveling up their skills with the elegant weapon of the Jedi and the Force itself. Miller says that even in the earliest days of development, years of watching lightsabers on screen and pretend battles in backyards made using the virtual rendition utterly organic. “Everybody knows exactly how to turn it on and what to do with it when they get it.”

When it came to rendering the notorious Sith Lord himself, artists looked to actors who portrayed him, including the more recent depictions of Vader in *Rogue One* for cues on

the former Anakin Skywalker who held the most allure and promised a certain grandeur. “We all came up with Vader,” Miller says.

## Making Mustafar

As seen in *Rogue One*, Vader’s castle on Mustafar presented an ideal setting for the VR experience, allowing the story to take place at an earlier time than the film, set just before the events of *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977). The team wanted to address the concept of, “What’s he doing on a personal level?” Miller recalls.

Inside the experience, you take on the role of a smuggler. You arrive on the planet when your ship is pulled out of hyperspace over Mustafar, accompanied by your fretful droid counterpart, the effortlessly gliding ZO-E3 played by Maya Rudolph. Tossed in a cell, you soon discover Vader wants you for a special task, tapping into some ancient powers within the planet itself. “The player enters the story as a key Vader needs to unlock some of these powers,” Miller says. After solving a puzzle some of your own secrets are revealed, including a mysterious heritage that

01 Episode One of *Vader Immortal* begins with your ship being intercepted by the Empire.

02 Mustafar, the location of Darth Vader’s lair (Concept art).

03 Players get to train in the ways of the Force under Vader himself.

04 In-engine capture from *Vader Immortal: A Star Wars VR Series*.

05 Scott Lawrence (Jarek Yeager in *Star Wars Resistance*) provides the deep vocal tones of Darth Vader.



## HIDDEN HISTORY

"There's a grandeur in *Star Wars* at its best and you want some spectacle," explains *Vader Immortal* director, Ben Snow. But the dank, dark caverns of Vader's castle on Mustafar gave storytellers the chance to play with the idea of what Snow calls a "hidden history," adding a different feel to this aspect of the experience.

Utilizing a lesson the director learned while working as part of the special effects team on *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002), specifically the Geonosis droid factory sequence, Snow observes that, "If you make it as big as a football field, you have to fill it!" In other words, the bigger the environment, the more background detail is required to lend that space reality. In *Vader Immortal*, the circuitous layout of the caves creates an aura of mystery, with scenes being played out in more compact spaces, heightening tension by giving users a tangible feeling of claustrophobia.



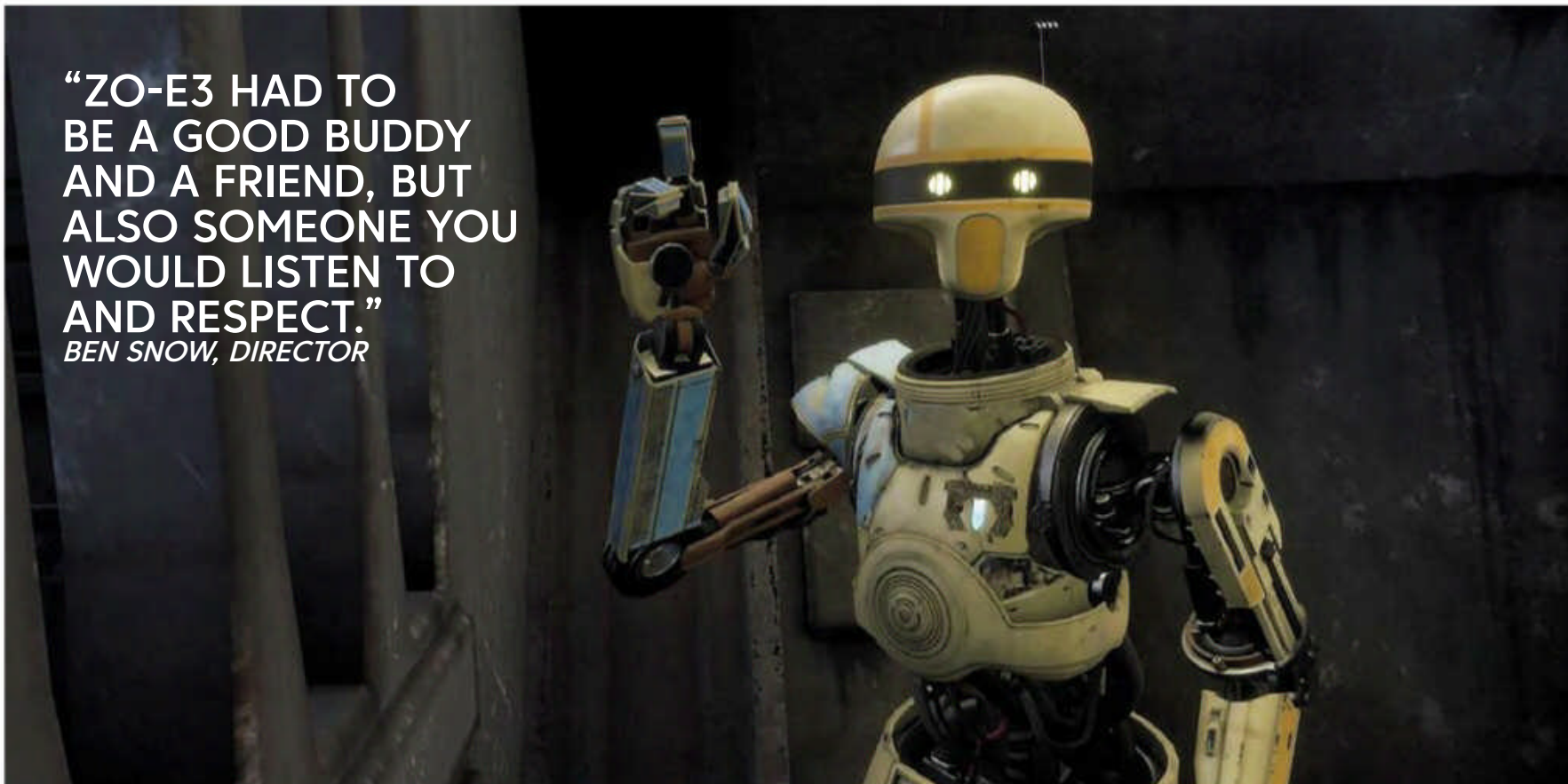
**"TO BE ABLE TO STAND IN THE ROOM WITH VADER WAS COMPELLING FOR EVERYBODY WE PUT IN THERE."**

**MARK S. MILLER, EXECUTIVE CREATIVE PRODUCER**



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**“ZO-E3 HAD TO BE A GOOD BUDDY AND A FRIEND, BUT ALSO SOMEONE YOU WOULD LISTEN TO AND RESPECT.”**  
*BEN SNOW, DIRECTOR*



► his formidable bearing and trademark purposeful stride. “It’s so entrenched in our minds, we didn’t want to lose it,” Snow says. “It’s a challenge because you need the impression, but you also want the depth as well.” Meanwhile, casting directors turned to *Star Wars Resistance* actor Scott Lawrence to add the booming vocal track. “He’s got a few key lines that he does for himself at the start of every Vader performance to get into that character,” Miller says, quoting classic lines that put Lawrence into the headspace of the iconic villain. “And he uses those to really nail it and get in there. Once he does that and starts going through the lines, he’s Vader.”

### Casting a Companion

Another key casting decision was to have actress Maya Rudolph as the voice of ZO-E3. Literally the first choice, the team turned to Rudolph to play the affable droid because she had to be both funny and likeable, but also someone who could be trusted to disseminate important directions. As the character with the most lines in the experience, ZO-E3 also acts as a mouthpiece for the user at home, voicing her concerns when things seem to be going wrong. “We knew that the player didn’t have a voice, so we also knew that ZO-E3 was going to have the most lines and was going to be the most important,” Miller says. “She has to move you along through it. She has to be able to teach you stuff and nag you to the next room when you need to leave. But we also wanted there to be a connection so you’re very much a team.”

“We wanted someone who felt like they had been around, that knew their stuff, that was very

06 Your helpful droid companion ZO-E3, played by Maya Rudolph.

capable but who was warm and funny as well,” Snow adds. “ZO-E3 has to be a good buddy and a friend, but also someone you would listen to and respect.” In addition to the droid, a Mustafarian named Vylip, the mysterious cloaked figure of the Black Bishop, and a handful of other characters round out the experience, including the menacing darkghast—a massive, rancor-like creature that elicits a visceral reaction as it lunges toward you in the winding subterranean caves.

In the world of *Vader Immortal*, you will arrive on Mustafar, spy on Darth Vader in his most private and vulnerable moments, descend into the depths of the lava planet, survive to fight another day, and ascend for the ultimate final battle—a climactic duel with the iconic Sith Lord himself—and all without leaving your own home. It’s a multi-layered story that unfolds before your very eyes, and you get to play a vital part in it. 🗡️



LIGHTSABER DOJO **NEXT PAGE** ►





# LIGHTSABER DOJO

**W**hen designing the Lightsaber Dojos, a trio of complementary training grounds inside the *Vader Immortal* experience, Senior Experience Designer Jose Perez III spent months designing lightsaber hilts, working with his team to get just the right shades for blades, and learning that each iconic lightsaber has its own unique ignition sound.

"The color talks were deep, and we got really nerdy debating the proper lengths of lightsabers and the timing for each blade to release," Perez says. But it was the sound of each lightsaber being ignited that he found most fascinating. "I didn't know that every single lightsaber has a completely different sound. Vader's lightsaber is hissy and mean, and Luke's is distinctive from all the others."

Among the ILMxLAB crew, Perez and gameplay engineer Stephanie Tong spent

countless hours building, refining, and playtesting the Lightsaber Dojos. As each episode unfolds, the training grounds become more intense, from learning to wield and defend with a simple lightsaber blade to using the Force. "And by the third one, it's just crazy," Perez says. "We asked ourselves, 'What if you had two lightsabers, and a blaster, and thermal detonators, and the Force too?'" he says with a laugh.

"The thing with Lightsaber Dojo is, it's really a side thing we made to experiment and play with lightsabers," he adds. This allowed designers to break free from the narrative confines of the overall *Vader Immortal* story while maintaining the aesthetics of the experience's design. Perez and the team designed 20 new unique lightsaber combos, then incorporated 19 other iconic and elegant weapons. "There's every lightsaber that Anakin encountered in his life that was important to him in some way," Perez explains.

"There's something that's amazing when you're in there and you're holding Luke's original lightsaber. It was one of those few places where we didn't have to have a good story excuse to do it. We could just give them to the player," Perez adds. "This is the most advanced lightsaber toy ever experienced." 🙌

## Hints & Tips

Perez and Tong offer six top tips for conquering the Lightsaber Dojo at all levels:

**01**

"It's pretty much a waiting game," Tong says of Dojo I. "Strike first," and you can get a leg up on the enemies and keep your ears open for attack cues.

**02**

In Dojo II, "You can bash droids with an unlit lightsaber," Perez says. Turning off your weapon and flinging it with the Force will make them dizzy and vulnerable for a second.

**03**

The traps in Dojo II are the best way to get better times if you're going for speed.

**04**

In Dojo III, channel your inner Palpatine and get Force Lightning by eliminating 50 or more enemies in unleashed rounds. But beware—you can only access the power for a limited time.

**05**

You can punch the lava spitters in Dojo III when they get close and squish them when they're in the air.

**06**

Playing for rewards will yield new lightsaber blade colors, unlock iconic hilts, and can even score you some new gloves, which are the only visible part of your costume when you're in the experience.



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# AHSOKA LIVES!

Ashley Eckstein talks exclusively to *Insider* about returning to the role of Ahsoka Tano in the seventh and final season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008-14, 2020) and *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). Plus, she reveals the quote that has become her personal motto.

WORDS: AMY RATCLIFFE

**“In my life, when  
people need you,  
you help them. No  
matter what.”**

*Ahsoka Tano*





*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*' final season brought back Ahsoka Tano—an Ahsoka we haven't seen

before. Although it's been seven years since we watched her walk away from the Jedi Order in the show's season five finale, only a short time had passed in the galaxy far, far away, and the character is still coping with that huge upheaval in her life. *Insider* spoke with the actress about Ahsoka's long-awaited return.

**Star Wars Insider:** Fans were so surprised to hear about the return of *The Clone Wars*. How did you react when you heard the news?

**Ashley Eckstein:** I first heard about it from Dee Bradley Baker. I was at Disney World riding rides with my husband, and I got this text message. I knew that Dee was wine tasting with the *Star Wars Rebels* (2014-2018) cast and that Dave Filoni was there, so when he sent me the text message and he said, "*Clone Wars*, 12 episodes coming back," I didn't believe it. I was like, "That is top secret news."

**"When *The Clone Wars* was canceled, it was so sad. We didn't get the proper goodbye."**

**So it wasn't something you expected to hear in a text message?**

I forget exactly how the text chain unfolded, but Dee was like, "No, no, for real. This is happening." Of course, I was excited because if Dee is telling me that it's for real, then I want to believe him because he is like a brother to me.

I heard from my agent next, and I still didn't believe it. I said, "Wait a minute, I haven't heard it from Dave. This can't be real." So, I called Dave and he said, "Hey, what's going on?" I said, "Do you have something to tell me?" Dave felt really bad. He said that wasn't how he wanted me to find out, but that it was true, and I was so excited. I didn't fully believe it until I heard it from Dave Filoni.

**How emotional was it to know that you'd be coming back?**

When *The Clone Wars* was canceled, it was so sad. We didn't

get the proper goodbye. We didn't get that final recording session or that happy wrap party. So, I took *The Clone Wars*, locked it in a place in my heart, and I threw away the key. I was so hurt and didn't want to allow anyone to hurt us again. When I found out that it was happening, I was in absolute disbelief. Obviously Dave Filoni was crucial to it, but one person that is the unsung hero, that is not getting the credit that she deserves, is Carrie Beck (vice president of animation and live-action development at Lucasfilm Ltd). I'm forever grateful to the fans for not giving up, I'm forever grateful to Carrie Beck for believing that it could come back, I'm forever grateful to Dave Filoni for getting the gang back together, and I'm forever grateful to Disney+ for giving it a home.

**You mentioned the fans never giving up. They threw their all into the "Save *The Clone Wars*" campaign for years, and now it's #CloneWarsSaved. Did it warm your heart to see that support over the years?**

Yes. Though I'm usually a very, very positive person, I was not so positive about *The Clone Wars*. I never thought it would ever come back. It's kind of ironic that the last fortune cookie caption for the last episode in which Ahsoka had appeared was, "Never give up hope, no matter how dark things seem." The fans never gave up hope. They always had hope that *The Clone Wars* would be saved, and here we are. They took that very last fortune cookie to heart.

**What conversations did you have with Dave Filoni about Ahsoka's return to the screen?**

They always happened in the studio right before we would record



01





02

an episode. Before we started, Dave [Filoni] would come in and he would give us a 20 to 30-minute breakdown of each episode. That's how I learned *Star Wars*. I've been a lifelong *Star Wars* fan, I grew up loving *Star Wars*, but I didn't know it like I do now. Dave would always tie the breakdowns to other parts of the saga. I learned so much.

Those moments were like lost episodes. He would tell us what our character was going through, what emotional space we were in, what head space we should be in, what our agenda for that episode was for our characters. What were they trying to say? What were they trying to achieve? What were they going through? It was truly a deep dive into each episode.

**The cast records together, so how productive was that first session when you were all reunited?**

We're all professionals, but there was so much joy. So much laughter, so many jokes, so much acting up,

01 Ashley Eckstein strikes an Ahsoka Tano pose at *Galaxy's Edge*.

02 Ahsoka Tano was the breakout character of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*.

**“Every single time we walked into the studio, it was one step closer to the end.”**

so much silliness. But also, so many emotions. The episode records got very deep at times. They got very sad, very emotional. When we were recording *The Clone Wars* before, we knew that we had so many episodes ahead of us. There was never that thought of, “This is the last one.” We never had the countdown, but with these last 12, we did have that countdown.

Every single time we walked into the studio, it was one step closer to the end. There was a bit of sadness every single time. Dave really had to keep us in check because we brought an essence of sadness and deepness to these episodes ▶

## A VOICE IN THE DARK

Ashley Eckstein on her experience of reprising the role of Ahsoka Tano in *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker*.

“I found out I was doing it a couple days before I went into the studio,” explains Eckstein about her character's surprise vocal appearance in the movie. “I walked into the theater at Bad Robot, and there was Matthew Wood [supervising sound editor] and J.J. Abrams, the director. J.J. shook my hand and introduced himself, and immediately thanked me for being in the movie. I couldn't believe it.”

Ahsoka's ethereal voice is one of many Jedi lending support to Rey in her darkest hour, so how did Eckstein approach her character's dialogue given it's impossible to determine which time period Ahsoka was speaking from?

“J.J. asked a similar question after I'd recorded the lines. He said, ‘Being a voice actor, obviously you're not on set, you're not physically acting a scene out, so what do you visualize when you read your lines?’ I can't say that it's necessarily something I visualize, it's actually a feeling that I have. I know when my voice is in the right spot. I can feel it. My own voice, as in just Ashley Eckstein, sometimes it's too high pitched. I get too excited, I go too high, so I have to tone it down a bit. There's a feeling I get when I know that I'm in the right vocal range for Ahsoka, and I also feel it when I know that I'm not.”





03

► that our characters wouldn't have had. It was definitely a mixture of heightened emotions. Heightened happiness, joy, sadness; and in between somewhere the episodes got done.

**You had to take Ahsoka back to a place before she was the wise mentor we saw in *Star Wars Rebels*. Was it difficult to rediscover her younger voice?**

That's something we talked about a lot. I did go back to the end of Season Five, because these episodes do pick up right where we left off, and I tried to get my voice back to where Ahsoka was then. It was

quite difficult for me to get my vocal performance to where Ahsoka was in *Star Wars Rebels*, but I eventually got into that sweet spot where I could just fall into her voice. This time I had to forget everything I'd learned for *Star Wars Rebels* and go back to *The Clone Wars* place.

Eventually where we settled was somewhere in between. *Star Wars Rebels* Ahsoka was what was fresh in everyone's minds. Ahsoka, after she walked away from the Jedi Order, was in a much more serious place. She was in a dark and sad place. When we're in a sad place, oftentimes our voice does become lower and deeper. So, I made my voice somewhere in



04

**"I care about Ahsoka as though she is a part of me. I never want anything bad to happen to her."**

between Season Five Ahsoka, and *Star Wars Rebels* Ahsoka.

**Until *Star Wars Rebels*, we didn't know if Ahsoka survived Order 66, and then it was all about whether she'd survive against Darth Vader and the Inquisitors. Was it a relief to record this time knowing she had a future?**

It was definitely a relief. I care about Ahsoka as though she is a part of me. I never want anything bad to happen to her. I will always care so deeply, on a human level, about what happens with this character. So it was nice to know that Ahsoka survives. I have these new pins coming out that



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illustrator Karen Hallion has done the art for. I picked a word for each character, and for Ahsoka, it was very important to me that her word was “survivor” because while we always say “Ahsoka lives,” actually Ahsoka survives. No matter what, against all odds, Ahsoka survives. It’s nice to know that she made it through *The Clone Wars*.

**Ahsoka has an incredible line in her return that feels very symbolic of her character: “In my life, when people need you, you help them. No matter what.” Does that quote resonate with you?**

There’s a whole story behind this line, and it blows my mind how this came full circle. We’re not allowed to keep our scripts; when we leave the recording studio, we have to leave them with Lucasfilm, but when I read that line as I was recording the episode, something came over me. I said, “This line. This line is going to be my personal motto for the new season and for 2020.” I broke a rule, and I took a screenshot of the line. That’s all I have. It’s just a screenshot of the line only—I cut out the rest of the page because I didn’t want to be responsible for having a page from the script. When I read that line I said, “That’s it. That is going to be my personal motto.”

I wanted to do good with it and help people no matter what. I started working on a new Jedi training program for children that focuses on mindfulness, and I’ve been working with Disney and Lucasfilm to bring this program to



07

children’s hospitals all over the nation. Ahsoka is teaching us that lesson, to help people no matter what. I got goosebumps all over when I recorded that line. I knew it was important, but at the time I had no idea how important it was going to become.

**What would you say ties the final season to its predecessors, especially in terms of your character?**

It picks up on the theme that ran through *The Clone Wars*: Never give up hope, no matter how dark things seem. When it feels like hope is gone, there’s always hope. All these episodes include beautiful examples of friendship; whether it’s between Ahsoka, Trace, and Rafa, or between Ahsoka and Captain Rex. They’re beautiful

03 Eckstein wrote the Little Golden Book, *I Am a Padawan*.

04 Ashley Eckstein’s high fashion take on Sith style.

05 Ahsoka Tano (Eckstein) made her screen debut in 2008’s *The Clone Wars* movie.

06 Tano returned in *Star Wars Rebels*.

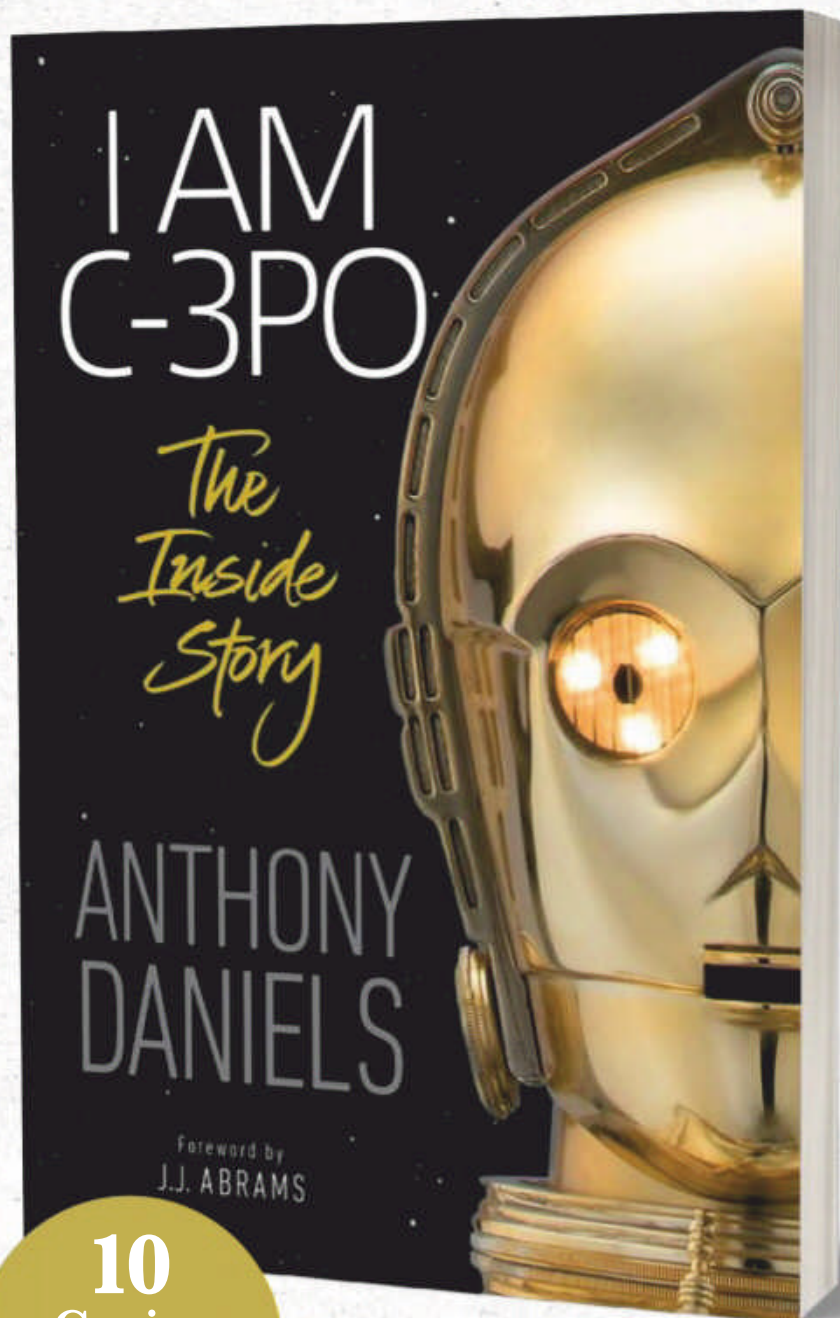
07 Ahsoka battles her former master.

stories about friendship and about helping each other.

For Ahsoka, they are so powerful. She really comes into her own in these episodes. If you think that what we’ve seen from Ahsoka up to now is that she always wants to do what’s right, boy do you see that in these episodes. Literally, when she doesn’t have to, when everyone is telling her not to, Ahsoka doesn’t compromise who she is. It’s just so powerful.

I changed the hashtag—well, not exactly changed because I still use #AhsokaLives all the time, but I added to the hashtag, #AhsokaLivesInAllOfUs. Especially after these episodes, there’s so much we can take away from her. She’s passed on all these lessons now, after so many years. I think it’s our job to continue her legacy. It’s up to all of us. Ahsoka truly lives in all of us. 🕯️





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# A SEAT ON THE COUNCIL

THE JEDI MASTERS WHO GUIDED THE PATH OF THE ORDER, THROUGH THE LIGHT AND DARK TIMES.

In times of peace and war the Jedi High Council served as the guiding light and decision-making body for the Jedi Order. While only the most revered Jedi Masters served on the Council, even they could be blinded by the rise of the dark side of the Force.

WORDS: AMY RICHAU

V

isitors to the capital world of the Republic never failed to be impressed by its sweeping vistas

of endless skyscrapers, a seemingly infinite sea of structures that covered the planet from pole to pole. In Galactic City, airspeeders zipped between buildings that pierced the sky, while hundreds of densely populated levels beneath “ground level” were where the majority of its residents spent their entire lives, many never venturing to the surface.

One building in particular dominated the skyline of the Temple Precinct, its five elegant spires reaching toward the stars. This was the Jedi Temple, home to the Jedi Order for over a thousand years. The central spire, known as the Temple Spire or sometimes Tranquility Spire, honored the history of the Jedi. The four surrounding towers housed the Council of Reassignment, the

Council of First Knowledge, the Council of Reconciliation, and the Jedi High Council—more often referred to as the Jedi Council.

Introduced during a time of galactic prosperity, the Jedi Council was composed of twelve Jedi Masters, chosen by their peers and tasked with making important decisions on behalf of the Order as guided by the Jedi Code. Central to the Jedi Order’s remit was the task of upholding peace and justice for the citizens of the galaxy, so a seat on the council carried with it a great burden of responsibility.

While the path to becoming a member of the Jedi Council varied, attaining the rank of “Master” was (with one exception) integral to the journey. Jedi Knights could be promoted to Jedi Masters in several ways, such as passing on their knowledge of the Force to young Padawans or proving themselves in battle. Obi-Wan Kenobi became a Jedi Master after helping the Naboo thwart a Trade Federation invasion.

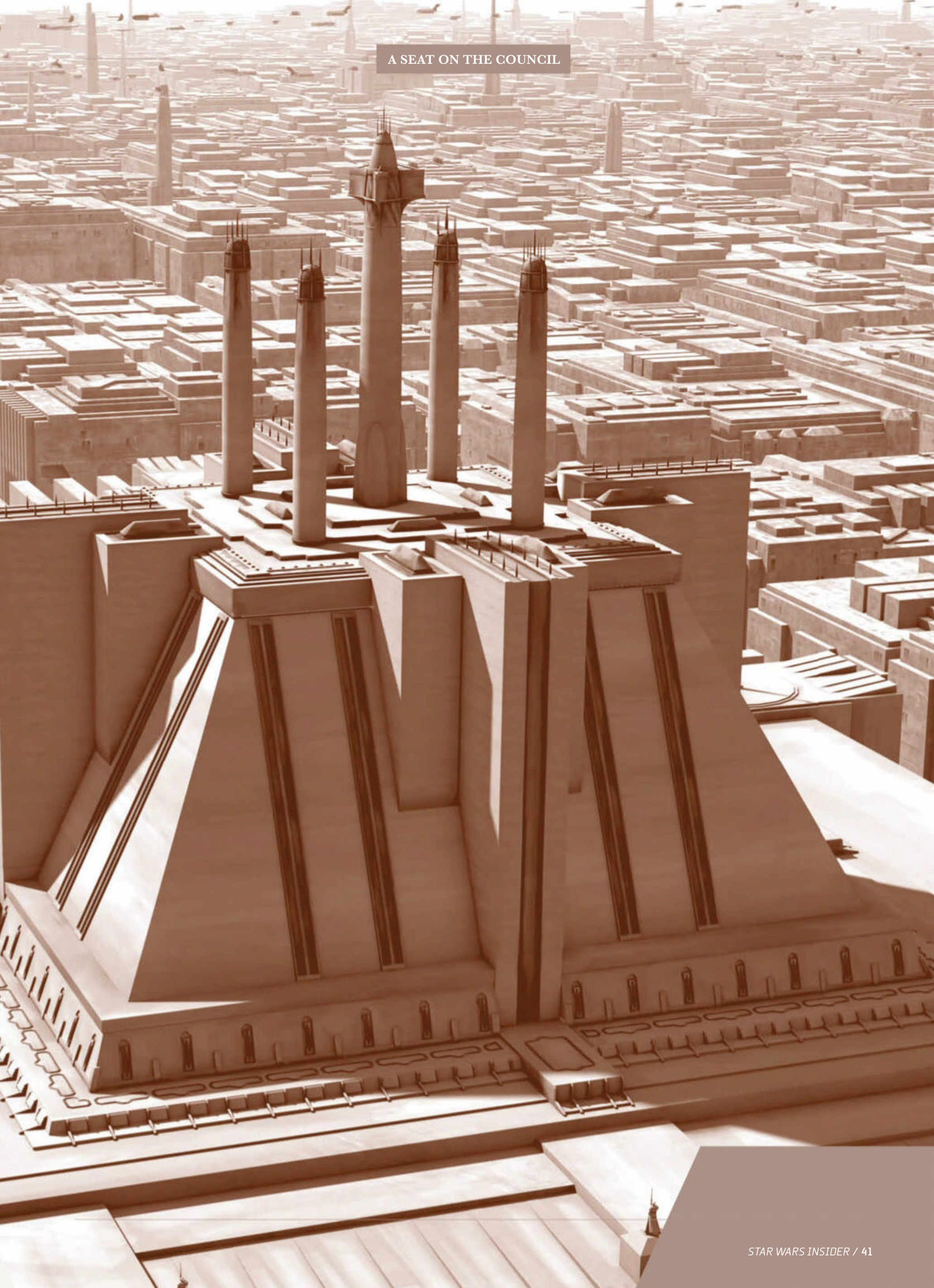
However, not all Jedi Masters would attain a seat on the Council, and only one Jedi Knight—Anakin Skywalker, former Padawan of Obi-Wan—did so without being granted the auspicious rank. He became the last to be appointed to the Council before it fell apart.

## Diplomacy, Disagreements, and Departures

Even within a small body such as the Jedi Council there existed a hierarchy. The Master of the Order was the leader of the Jedi Council, appointed via a unanimous vote by their fellow Council members. Mace Windu and Yoda both held the title of Master of the Order before the outbreak of the Clone Wars. While the most important decisions



A SEAT ON THE COUNCIL



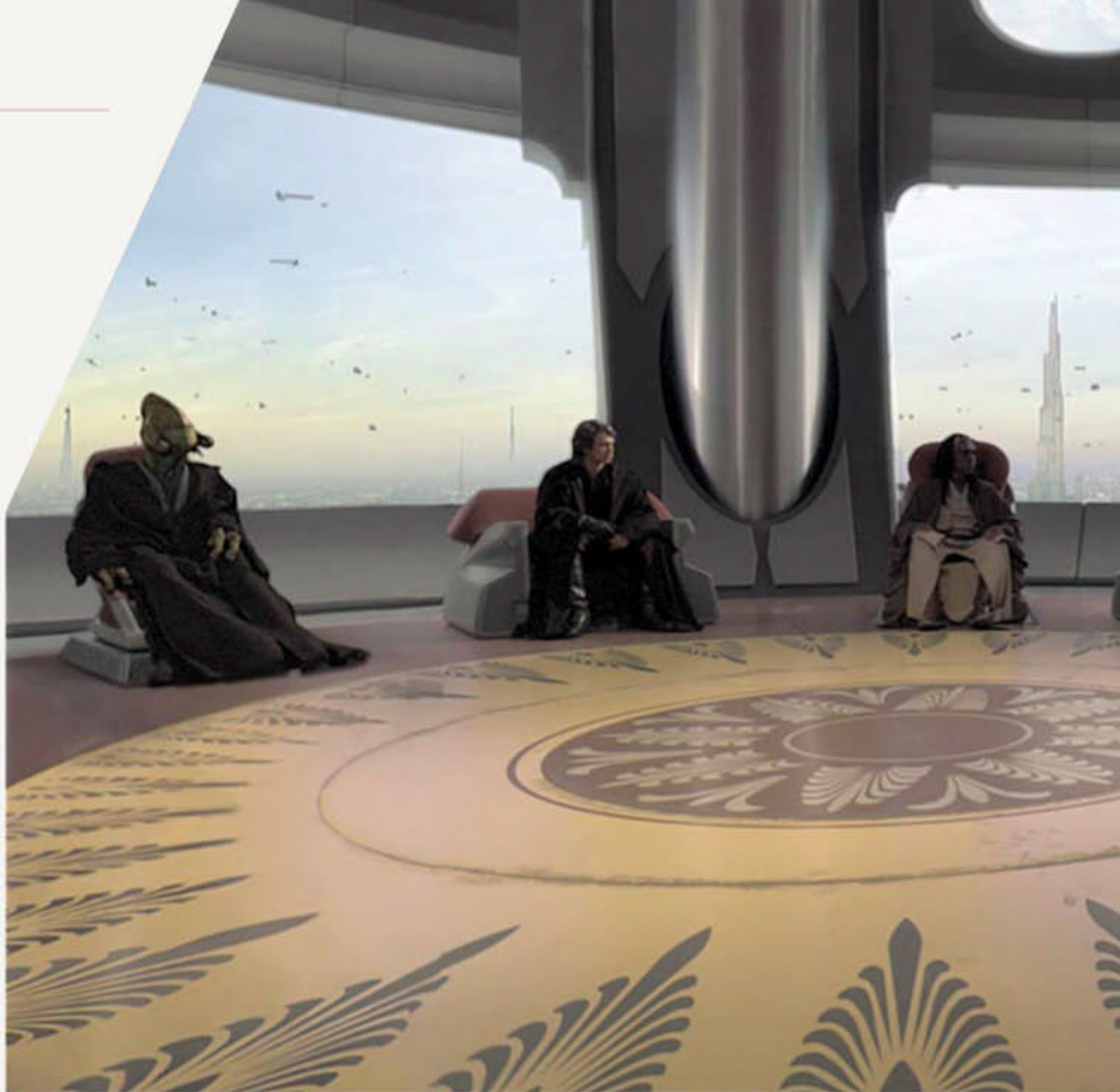


► were made by the Council as a whole, both Yoda and Mace Windu frequently met with Jedi Knights, politicians, and leaders of different systems to discuss ideas and concerns in unofficial settings and casual meetings. The Council's job became significantly more challenging with the rise of the Separatists against the Galactic Republic and the threat of the return of the Sith.

The Council's leaders worked closely with the Republic Senate and its Supreme Chancellor but neither organization held sway over the other, and they frequently did not see issues eye to eye. Mace Windu, in particular, was wary of how closely bound the Jedi and Senate could be at times. "We're keepers of the peace, not soldiers," he reminded Palpatine in the days that preceded the Clone Wars.

Disagreements were not limited to just those outside the Order. Jedi Knights and Council members also had strongly differing opinions about how much, if any, attention should be paid to the history of the Sith—the ancient nemesis of the Jedi. While some Jedi Masters sought to gain knowledge from Sith artifacts, others on the Council deemed such quests to be dangerous or a waste of time. One Council member, Yula Braylon (a seeker who searched the galaxy for Force-sensitive children to be trained at the Jedi Temple), questioned her fellow Jedi Lene Kostana's interest in learning more about Sith artifacts.

01



02



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Braylon accused her comrade of being obsessed with the Sith, but Kostana argued that reducing the Sith to a footnote in history might play directly into their hands.

Until Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi encountered a mystery assailant on Tatooine, it was widely believed that the long-dormant Sith no longer existed, and despite testament to the contrary, Council members including Ki-Adi-Mundi and Mace Windu initially refused to believe the Sith could have re-emerged from the darkness without





- 01 A meeting of the Jedi Council during its final days.
- 02 Yoda and Mace Windu both fulfilled the role of Master of the Order prior to the Clone Wars.
- 03 Anakin Skywalker became the youngest Jedi Knight to serve on the council.

## ANOTHER DESTINY

While a seat on the Jedi Council was an honor, for some Jedi it was not the ultimate destiny of their place within the Order. Some Jedi Masters left the Council to serve the Force in different ways while others left the Order entirely.

Jocasta Nu traded in her seat on the Council for the position of Chief Librarian in the Jedi Archives. She survived Order 66 and attempted to gather Jedi and Sith artifacts to recreate the Jedi Archives for a new Jedi school. Nu returned to Coruscant to retrieve a holocron which held the names of Force-sensitive children, but was discovered by Darth Vader, who took the holocron and Jocasta's life.

Jedi Master Eeth Koth was forced to leave the Jedi Council at some point near the end of the Clone Wars, and he eventually decided to leave the Jedi Order entirely. Koth joined the Church of Enlightenment where he became a priest who officiated weddings. Approximately five years after Order 66 Darth Vader tracked Koth down, but Koth felt no allegiance to the Jedi and offered to help Vader locate other Jedi survivors in exchange for the lives of his wife and newborn child. Vader murdered Koth and took his child to Coruscant for Project Harvester, a program to turn Force-sensitive children to the dark side.

the knowledge of the Jedi leaders. Yoda, however, was more cautious. Despite previously believing the Sith to be in the past, he admitted the possibility of a return in his acknowledgement that the dark side was "hard to see." As Grand Master of the Jedi Order his opinion held great weight, and the Council set about the task of discovering the identity of the mysterious foe. Yet his acknowledgement of the threat did not result in the Jedi preparing for the eventual return of the enemy. Sith objects in the Archive of Forbidden Artifacts remained hidden—even from other Jedi—and the Council kept their focus on the present in the hope that the evils of the past would stay there.

Aside from Yoda and Mace Windu, other key figures in the later history of the Council included Master Sifo-Dyas, who had risen through the ranks of the Jedi to become a Council member with his childhood friend, Dooku. Sifo-Dyas had been plagued by nightmarish visions of the future throughout his life, foreseeing a galactic conflict that would devastate the Republic.

After presenting his fears to the Council and advocating for the formation of an army to fight this war, his fellow Council members forced Sifo-Dyas off of the Council, considering his ideas too extreme. Sifo-Dyas later secretly ordered the production of a clone army on behalf of the Jedi Council in an attempt to save the Republic. Dooku, a former Padawan of Master Yoda, gave up his seat on the Jedi Council after becoming disillusioned with the Jedi Order. Ultimately, Dooku turned to the dark side of the Force. Dooku's allegiance to Darth Sidious and consequently the Sith later helped bring an end to the Jedi Council and the Order it served.

### The Broken Chamber

The stresses, strains, and tragic losses during the Clone Wars took their toll on many Jedi. Rarely could the entire Council meet in person at the same time as many members, including long-term seat holder Plo Koon and newly appointed Kit Fisto, saw active duty as generals in the Grand Army of



► the Republic. During these testing times the Council often gathered in a command center on Coruscant as opposed to the Jedi Temple, some members appearing via hologram.

During the Clone Wars the Council suffered many losses. Coleman Trebor, one of the rare Vurks to become a Jedi, was killed by Jango Fett as he confronted Count Dooku during the First Battle of Geonosis. Adi Gallia, who had previously helped rescue fellow Council members Eeth Koth and Obi-Wan Kenobi in separate missions, died in a lightsaber duel with Darth Maul's brother, Savage Opress. Even Piell, noted for his courage in battle, lost his life during a rescue attempt after being detained in a Separatist prison.

New members appointed to the Council during this period included

Kit Fisto, Stass Allie, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Agen Kolar, and Coleman Kcaj. Fisto was a noted duelist who fought in the First Battle of Geonosis. Stass Allie, known for her healing powers, succeeded her cousin Adi Gallia on the Council. Obi-Wan Kenobi took his seat after a steady stream of successful missions in the years following his master Qui-Gon Jinn's death, not least of which was becoming the first Jedi in a millennia to fight and defeat a Sith Lord. Master swordsmith Agen Kolar took Eeth Koth's place after Koth was forced to stand down by his fellow Jedi.

During the chaos of the Clone Wars, vacant seats on the Jedi Council became commonplace, which allowed Supreme Chancellor Palpatine—secretly the Sith Lord Darth Sidious—to use one such

space to his advantage. He manipulated the Jedi into accepting Anakin Skywalker onto the Council: Never before had a member been chosen by a non-Jedi. Despite the great honor of the appointment (which also made him the youngest Council member in Jedi history), Skywalker was enraged by the Council's decision not to award him the rank of Master. Possibly a calculated protest by the Jedi at Palpatine's interference, the decision had dire consequences.

Skywalker's subsequent discovery of Palpatine's secret identity as a Sith Lord led Mace Windu to gather what few members of the Council were available to arrest the Supreme Chancellor. However, the Jedi vastly underestimated Palpatine's power, with tragic consequences. Saesee Tiin, Kit Fisto, and Agen Kolar were swiftly dispatched, and Windu himself was killed by the Sith Lord. In a few brief moments, a quarter of the Council were wiped out.

After Skywalker turned to the dark side and became Darth Vader, Darth Sidious' new apprentice, the execution of Order 66 resulted in the deaths of many Council members. Flying a patrol mission in Cato Neimoidia, Plo Koon was shot down by his clone trooper wingman; Stass Allie was blindsided



04

05



04 Coleman Trebor's heroic stand against Count Dooku was to be his last.

05 Yoda survived Order 66 with help from his Wookiee friends on Kashyyyk.



## A DIFFERENT PATH

Despite the Jedi Code forbidding personal attachments, many—including those on the Council—formed close ties with others during their lives.

Plo Koon remained close to Padawan Ahsoka Tano years after he brought her to the Jedi Temple as a young child for training. He was one of the Council members who voted not to expel Tano after she was accused of bombing the Jedi Temple.

Shaak Ti, who joined the Council after Yaddle chose to step down, was the main liaison between the Jedi and the clone trooper army created on Kamino. Ti was empathetic to the clones' experiences and was able to gain their respect as both their commanding officer and as a mentor.

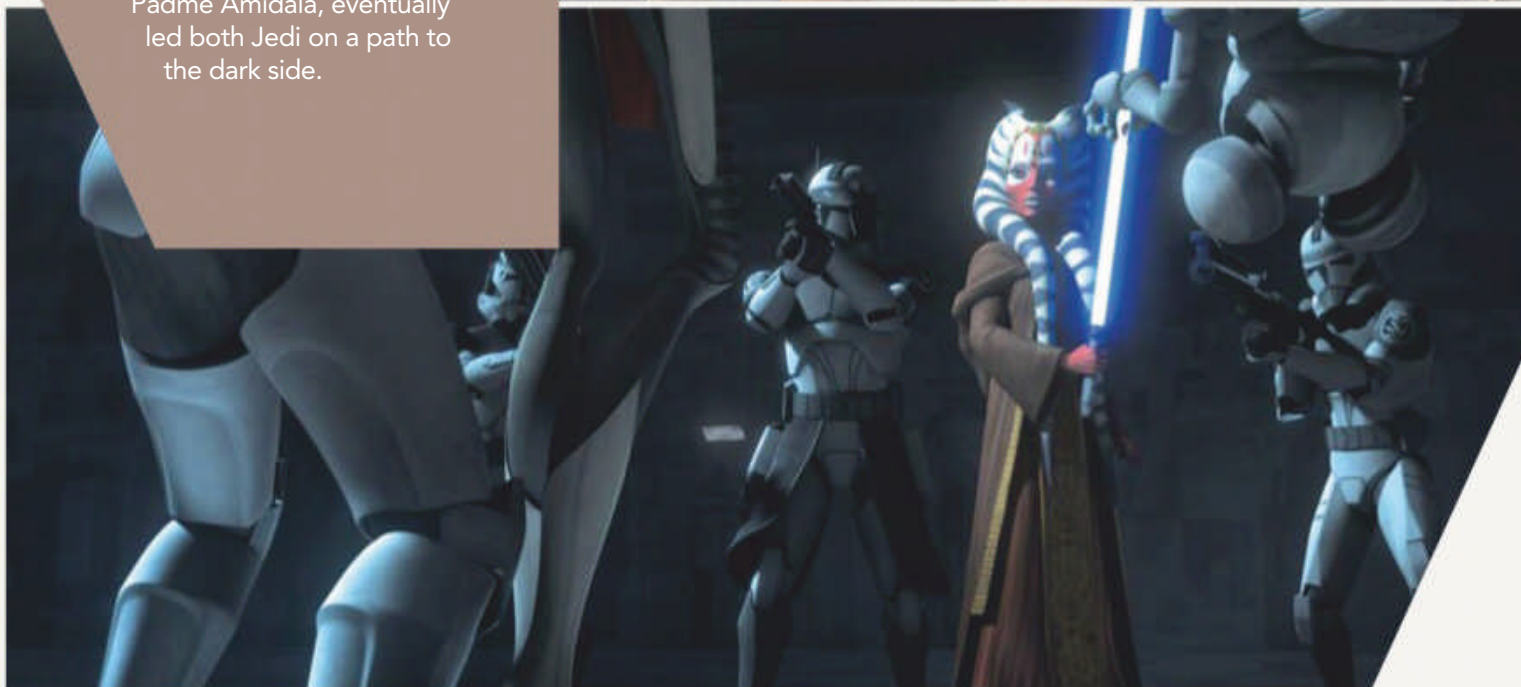
In addition, some Jedi who sat on the Council were unable or even unwilling to reject romantic or family attachments. Dooku's relationship with his sister Jenza, and Anakin Skywalker's bonds with his mother Shmi and his wife Padmé Amidala, eventually led both Jedi on a path to the dark side.



06



07



08

06 Jedi Masters Kit Fisto (left) and Plo Koon.

07 Adi Gallia (center) was killed by Savage Opress during the Clone Wars.

08 Shaak Ti was both a general and friend to the clone trooper army.

on a mission in Saleucami as clone troopers shot her speeder bike down; clone Commander Bacara ordered his fellow troopers to fire on Ki-Adi-Mundi on a bridge on Mygeeto; and Shaak Ti was murdered by Vader as she meditated in the Jedi Temple. Having rescinded her seat on the Council of her own volition during the war, Depa Billaba sacrificed her life to protect her Padawan, Caleb Dume, who would later become part of the nascent rebellion against the Empire as Kanan Jarrus.

Other Jedi were fortunate to escape the purge, including two notable members of the Council. Yoda went into hiding on Dagobah, while Kenobi retreated to Tatooine to protect Luke Skywalker, one of the twins born to Padmé Amidala before she died. The few remaining Jedi scattered across the galaxy, some surviving for years despite the efforts of Darth Vader and his Inquisitors to wipe them out.

For a thousand generations, the Jedi Council were protectors of the

Republic whose dedication to the ways of the Force helped maintain peace throughout the galaxy. While their opinions did not always align with one another, the strength of the Council came from its members' reliance on and respect for their peers. Perhaps the era of the High Republic—a time 200 years before the Invasion of Naboo—will reveal more about how the Council guided the Order to maintain peace and justice in the galaxy? Much to learn about the Jedi we still have. 🙏



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# STAR WARS INSIDER

## J E D I M A S T E R ' S

# Q U I Z

A Jedi's path does not always conform to the Order's traditions. Rogue Jedi have emerged who have followed the Force in their own unique fashion. What do you know about these independent thinkers? Compiled by Jay Stobie

## "IF I GO DOWN THIS PATH, I'M AFRAID WHERE IT MIGHT LEAD."

Maintain your focus as you reach out with the Force to retrieve these answers.

### THE LIGHT SIDE

**1: Jedi Knight Nahdar Vebb placed too much value on matching his enemy's power with his own in a fight with which foe?**

- A/ Admiral Trench
- B/ Darth Sidious
- C/ General Grievous
- D/ Darth Maul

**2: What codename did Ahsoka Tano use when she communicated with the Ghost's crew?**

- A/ Snips
- B/ Fulcrum
- C/ Togruta
- D/ Ashla



**3: Who did Quinlan Vos fall in love with during his mission to assassinate Count Dooku?**

- A/ Asajj Ventress
- B/ Depa Billaba
- C/ Aayla Secura
- D/ Bo-Katan Kryze

**4: What did Count Dooku claim Qui-Gon Jinn was aware of that might make him sympathetic to the Separatist cause?**

- A/ Creation of a clone army
- B/ Taxation of trade routes
- C/ Corruption in the Senate
- D/ Obi-Wan Kenobi's feelings for Satine Kryze

**5: Which object introduced Ezra Bridger to knowledge forbidden by the Jedi?**

- A/ Darksaber
- B/ Ochi of Bestoon's blade
- C/ Grand Inquisitor's lightsaber
- D/ Sith holocron

### THE DARK SIDE



**6: Who once served as a Jedi Temple Guard before falling to the dark side?**

- A/ The Fifth Brother
- B/ The Seventh Sister
- C/ The Eighth Brother
- D/ The Grand Inquisitor

**7: Which planet did Darth Vader visit on his first off-world mission for Darth Sidious?**

- A/ Malachor
- B/ Tatooine
- C/ Naboo
- D/ Mustafar



**8: What name did the Second Sister go by prior to her time as an Inquisitor?**

- A/ Eno Cordova
- B/ Trilla Suduri
- C/ Cere Junda
- D/ Luminara Unduli

**9: What did Barriss Offee's disillusionment cause her to do?**

- A/ Destroy a Republic cruiser
- B/ Flee to Dathomir
- C/ Attack the Jedi Temple
- D/ Murder her master

**10: Which event precipitated Asajj Ventress' descent into darkness?**

- A/ Battle of Naboo
- B/ Master Ky Narec's death
- C/ Battle of Geonosis
- D/ The election of Supreme Chancellor Palpatine

### THE INFLUENCERS



**11: Where did Kylo Ren learn the truth about Snoke's past?**

- A/ Exegol
- B/ Crait
- C/ Kef Bir
- D/ Ahch-To

**12: What power did Darth Sidious offer to Anakin Skywalker in order to gain his loyalty?**

- A/ Force lightning
- B/ Mind control
- C/ Cheating death
- D/ Time travel

**13: Who continuously sought to tempt Ezra Bridger away from Kanan Jarrus?**

- A/ Maul
- B/ Darth Vader
- C/ Bendu
- D/ Ahsoka Tano

**14: Which group eventually received Ahsoka Tano's support after she left the Jedi Order?**

- A/ The Nightsisters
- B/ The Empire
- C/ The Rebel Alliance
- D/ The Sith

**15: In what star system were Anakin Skywalker and Ben Solo both redeemed?**

- A/ Tatooine
- B/ Endor
- C/ Jakku
- D/ Coruscant



“LET THE PAST DIE.”

Identify the Force users who spoke these lines that reflect their atypical journeys as Jedi:

1. “WHAT IF I TOLD YOU THAT THE REPUBLIC WAS NOW UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DARK LORD OF THE SITH?”

2. “I LOST MY WAY FOR A LONG TIME, BUT NOW I HAVE A CHANCE TO CHANGE THINGS.”

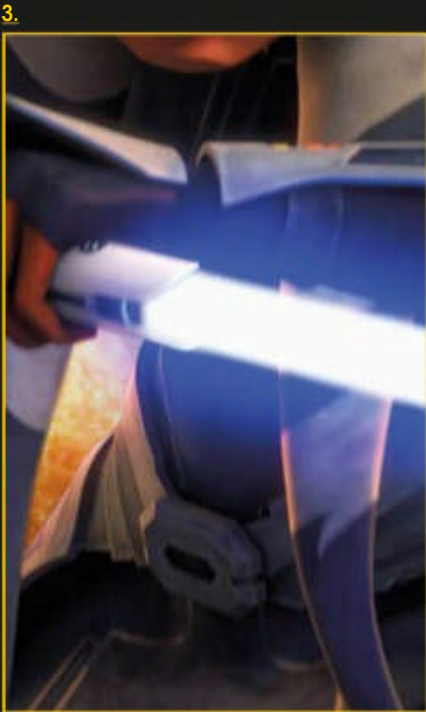
3. “SHOW ME AGAIN, THE POWER OF THE DARKNESS.”

4. “I WANT TO BECOME THE JEDI YOU SEE IN ME—THE ONE I DON’T ALWAYS SEE IN MYSELF.”

5. “THE EMPEROR WILL SHOW YOU THE TRUE NATURE OF THE FORCE.”

“I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO, BUT I DON’T KNOW IF I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO IT.”

Identify the rogue Jedi who wielded these lightsabers:



1. C, 2. B, 3. A, 4. C, 5. D, 6. D, 7. D, 8. B, 9. C, 10. B, 11. A, 12. C, 13. A, 14. C, 15. B.  
“LET THE PAST DIE.”  
1. Count Dooku, 2. Kamari Jarrus, 3. Kylo Ren, 4. Ezra Bridger, 5. Darth Vader.  
“I KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO, BUT I DON’T KNOW IF I HAVE THE STRENGTH TO DO IT.”  
1. Grand Inquisitor, 2. Kylo Ren, 3. Absoka Tano, 4. Count Dooku.

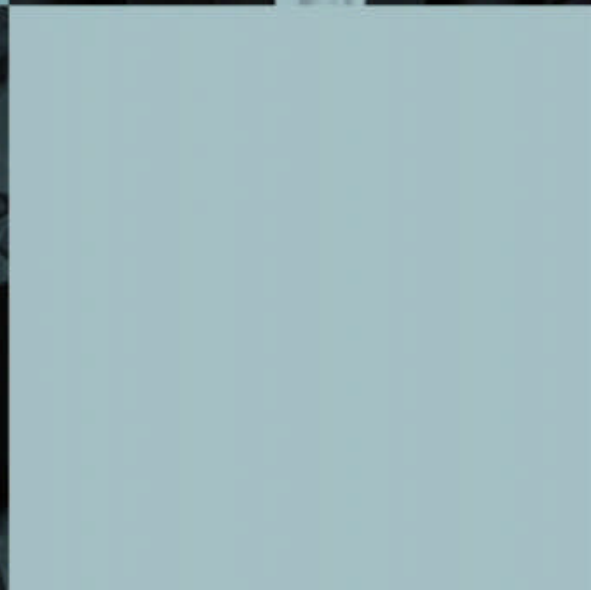
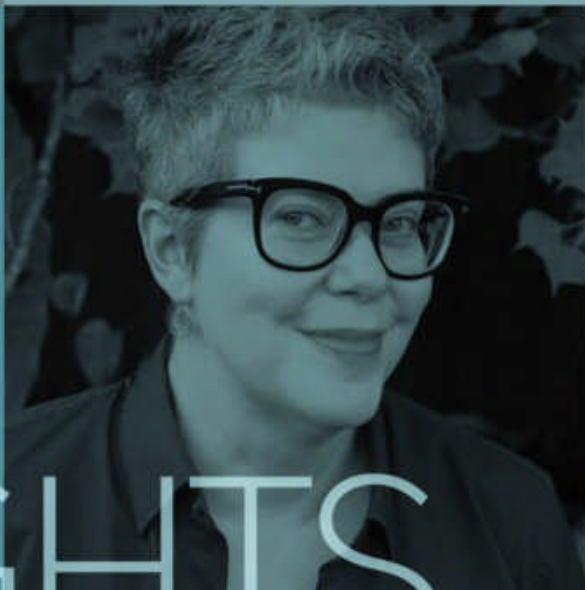
DID YOU STICK TO THE PATH OF A JEDI OR FALL TO THE DARK SIDE?

0-9: Practice, you must. A few rocks, lifting you should try.  
10-19: You have taken your first steps, from a certain point of view.  
20-24: Your training is now complete. You may now choose your own path.





The Authors  
of *Star Wars:*  
*The High Republic*



# KNIGHTS AT THE ROUNDTABLE



With the first tales in an exciting new era of *Star Wars* storytelling due to arrive in bookstores in January 2021, *Insider* assembled the group of talented creators behind *Star Wars: The High Republic* for a roundtable interview to talk Jedi Knights and a galaxy of potential.

WORDS: AMY RATCLIFFE



P

roject Luminous.

A mysterious phrase that crept into *Star Wars* authors' panel conversations

and social media posts during *Star Wars* Celebration Chicago in 2019. Fans learned that multiple publishers would be involved with the ambitious initiative—as would authors Claudia Gray, Justina Ireland, Daniel José Older, Cavan Scott, and Charles Soule. After months of teasers, Lucasfilm finally pulled back the curtains on February 24, 2020 and unveiled the title of this new saga: *Star Wars: The High Republic*.

The stories of *The High Republic*, which debuts in January 2021, take place in a new era, some two hundred years before the events of *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999). Publishing partners including Del Rey, Marvel Comics, IDW Publishing, Disney Lucasfilm Press, and more will release stories set in this timeline—a timeline created in partnership with five top-flight authors and Lucasfilm. *Insider* spoke with the writers and Lucasfilm Publishing Creative Director Michael Siglain about the upcoming tales.

***Star Wars Insider:*** You all worked together at Skywalker Ranch to brainstorm. We've heard the food there is terrific. So first thing's first, is there a particular meal you each recall loving?

**Daniel José Older:** I remember discovering the breakfast that they have, because there are multiple breakfasts. But there's one that they did in the tech building where they made eggs. Every day was something different, and what joy. What absolute joy.

02

**Cavan Scott:** I was having about three breakfasts a day, I think. I'd have the one in the guest house when I woke up early, because my head was still in U.K. time. Then they'd put out another buffet breakfast in the guest house so I'd have one of those. Then I'd wander to the tech building and have that one. I put on a few pounds.

**Charles Soule:** We were up there twice, and at the end of each time we would order a huge Chinese meal on the last night, and we would all

01 (Opposite page) Cavan Scott, Charles Soule, Claudia Gray, Daniel José Older, and Justina Ireland.

02 Cover art for *Light of the Jedi*, written by Charles Soule.

get plates of it. Then we would sit outside at the inn. We would all just sit and chat, and it was just really nice. It's a beautiful place anyway, but it felt like the work was done and we were just all together. The food was fine, but the company was great. **Claudia Gray:** Speak for yourself. The eclairs that we had the first day were amazing. They had mango puree. The company was fine; the food was great. **Justina Ireland:** The main house buffet—it's pretty awesome. I'm a big fan of dessert, so that was my favorite part.

*The High Republic* is a huge cross-publisher event. Mike, how did you pitch the idea and then bring it all together?

**Michael Siglain:** The concept of a cross-publisher event was something I first pitched to Kathleen Kennedy and to Kiri Hart in 2014. It just

**“We looked to a bunch of current creators that we considered our all-star *Star Wars* authors to come and craft this initiative.”**

*Michael Siglain, Lucasfilm Publishing Creative Director*





► took years of, “Can we do it now? Is now good? How about now?”

I had spoken to the publishers individually about the idea of doing something that would be unique to publishing—where we could have a corner of the galaxy that we could call our own—and everyone loved that concept. So, when we got toward the end of the Skywalker saga, Kathy said, “Okay, let’s start this. What can you do in publishing?” She threw down the gauntlet. The one caveat was that it had to be a Lucasfilm-driven initiative. That allowed us a ton of creative freedom because then we were really in the driver’s seat. So we looked to a bunch of current creators that we considered our all-star *Star Wars* authors to come and craft this initiative.”

Then the icing on the cake was saying, “Now let’s all go up to Skywalker Ranch and bring

## “How we’re approaching *The High Republic* is that it feels new and fresh. It’s an optimistic society; it’s a Republic that wants to explore its potential.”

Charles Soule

together Story Group and the editorial team and spend a couple days talking about what we love about *Star Wars*, and creating a whole new era to play in.”

**Cavan, we heard you put an idea on the table that helped form the foundation of *The High Republic*. Is that true?**

**Scott:** Well, what happened was that we all either came with an idea that was pre-formed, or we created

an idea during our first week at the ranch. Toward the end of the week we each pitched in a general idea, then we went away and added meat to those bones, incorporating the ideas in. My initial idea came from the question: What scares the Jedi? That started us off, but then we began to pool ideas from the other pitches as well. We were working on quite an evolved version of it, with everyone else obviously throwing their ideas in.



03







## Star Wars: The High Republic

Coming Soon...

**Light of the Jedi**  
Written by Charles Soule  
On sale January 5, 2021  
from Del Rey

**A Test of Courage**  
Written by Justina Ireland  
On sale January 5, 2021  
from Disney Lucasfilm Press

**Star Wars: The High Republic**  
Written by Cavan Scott  
On sale January 6, 2021  
from Marvel Comics

**Into the Dark**  
Written by Claudia Gray  
On sale February 2, 2021  
from Disney Lucasfilm Press

**Star Wars: The High Republic Adventures**  
Written by Daniel José Older  
On sale February 3, 2021  
from IDW Comics

04

In the prequel era, the Jedi Order is bound to the rules and tied closely into the Republic's politics. Is there a political factor to any of your *High Republic* stories?

**Soule:** How we're approaching *The High Republic* is that it feels new and fresh. It's an optimistic society; it's a Republic that wants to explore its potential through the chancellor of the time, Lina Soh. She is extremely influential, but the scope of her influence comes from her optimism and her hope and her sense that everyone in the Republic is part of the same thing. The slogan that she has promulgated as her

rallying cry for the Republic is, "We are all the Republic." That's something people say throughout all of the planets of the galaxy. The dividing lines that we see in the prequel era are between Separatists and so on. Those things don't exist here yet, and the idea is that it's a time when people can come together to bring the galaxy forward. Lina Soh has an expansive program of what are called "Great Works" that are designed to bring the High Republic to a new level, and also expand its principles and policies to new worlds.

03 Uncolored pages from issue #1 of Cavan Scott's *The High Republic* comic.

04 Variant cover art for *The High Republic* issue #1 by Ario Anindito.

**Justina, your *High Republic* story, *A Test of Courage*, features the youngest Jedi we know, Vernestra Rwoh. What world-building did you get to explore with her?**

**Ireland:** The inciting incident of the story is about this diplomatic envoy, these ambassadors going to the Inner Rim from the Outer Rim planets. These planets are not part of the Republic. When we get to *The Phantom Menace*, we see the Senate and there are hundreds and hundreds of planets represented. But at some point those planets had to decide to join the Republic, so, this is that period of expansion.





05 Cover art for Claudia Gray's *Into the Dark*.

► Part of that story is exploring what it looks like to be a young Jedi who gets sent on a diplomatic boondoggle, which is an official term, and things go wrong that have to be addressed. To have a kids' book that strips away those politics of the larger *Star Wars* era has always felt wrong. A lot of the conversation in the book is about what happens when certain people don't want to join the Republic. It's really about giving child characters a moment to have those very adult experiences in a more microcosm-type way, on a smaller scale. It's about reconciling the idea of, "I have these teachings behind me, but now I'm going up against people who don't have those same beliefs. How do we reconcile and realize that we all want the same thing? How do we look at our interactions with one another and

**"We're in this time of prosperity and it is this high moment in the Republic, but that also means that when things don't go well it's very striking."**

*Daniel José Older*

make the best choice, not just for ourselves but for everyone?"

**Claudia, your book—*Into the Dark*—features another young Jedi going out on an adventure, but he isn't maybe as excited about it as others. Tell us more about him.**

**Gray:** Reath is still a Padawan, unlike Vern, and he's looking forward to seeing her again as they're friends. But he really has been a little bit more sheltered than the average Padawan. His master is on the Jedi Council and has been much more centered on Coruscant than the average Jedi would be for that period of time. But now she's taken the job to be the head of *Starlight Beacon*, so he's going to the frontier, and he does not want to do that. He doesn't lack courage or ability, I want to be clear about that, but let's just say there are some of us that really, really like being around books. In chapter one he says, "Adventure is a euphemism for going places with lots of bugs." I think that's absolutely true.

He winds up with some adult Jedi being marooned on a very mysterious, very ancient space station that is full of surprises, dark and otherwise.

**Flipping over to the comic book side of things, Daniel, who are the main crew we'll be spending time with in *The High Republic Adventures* from IDW Comics?**

**Older:** One aspect I've been looking at very carefully is what it's like to be a young person in a time of gigantic change. Here, these kids who are on the front lines as young Jedi get to experience it and be sent out into the world, and really just have a very firsthand view of how the galaxy is changing. We're in this time of prosperity and it is a high moment in the Republic, but that also means that when things don't go well it's very striking and it's very sudden for them to realize their own vulnerability, their own place in the world. They have to actually take action to be a part of that, whether that means through investigation or just being friends to each other,





06

or actually being in the middle of combat and war. All those different things are explored.

That's the larger piece, but then we have Lula, a young Padawan who is very invested in the Jedi Order and becoming the greatest Jedi that she can possibly be. We also have her really good friend Farzala, who's kind of mischievous. Then they make friends with other people along the way. It's a really exciting adventure story to write, and it's great to follow these characters and get to have an interaction with some old favorites and new friends along the way.

**Charles, you're launching it all with *Light of the Jedi*. What's it like to be setting up this era?**

**Soule:** Well, it's an honor and a privilege, as they say. It's also

incredibly terrifying and pressure-filled, but it's a job that I'm very excited to have. Obviously, the good thing about it is that all the ideas in *Light of the Jedi* come from all the discussions that we've been having over the last two years. It's great to have this team to draw on. Yes, I'm writing it, but we're all in it together. We all kick ideas around, and everybody's helping to make it as strong as it can be. I think that's true of all the projects, which has been really great.

As far as writing it, the job of this project, because it is the first one out of the gate, is to introduce this time period to the readers in a very specific way—to make it clear that this is different from *Star Wars* that we've seen



07

**06** The authors with the Lucasfilm Story Group and Publishing teams at Skywalker Ranch.

**07** Gray, Scott, Soule, Older, and Ireland (left to right).

**08** The authors with Mike Siglain and James Waugh, VP, franchise content & strategy (top row, third and fourth from the right) at *The High Republic* Launch.

before. At the same time, the book needs to deliver a very exciting action story, introduce a ton of Jedi like Avar Kriss, and a load of really cool people from the Republic like the chancellor I mentioned earlier, while at the same time introduce the Nihil—the villains of the piece who will be causing a lot of trouble. As I mentioned earlier, the High Republic is a very optimistic, idealistic society that believes the wind is at their back, and that they're going to be able to do great things in the galaxy. Not everybody agrees with that, and they have some huge things to overcome; that's the Nihil. It really goes to some cool places.

**Finally, Cavan, you're writing the *Star Wars: The High Republic* series for Marvel Comics. What are the challenges that your characters will be facing?**

**Scott:** Like Daniel, I'm excited because we're telling the story of a team of Jedi. You normally only see the Jedi going off in twos, but this is a proper group of Jedi who are working together, and it's all based around Keeve Trennis. She's a very capable Jedi. Unlike Reath, she really wants to get out there, so she's very excited when she's posted to *Starlight*. But she also doesn't feel worthy to be there.

Keeve finds herself surrounded by this group of Jedi who are all legendary figures. You've got Avar Kriss, who Charles introduces in his book first of all. Everyone thinks she's the best of the best,



08



Turn to page 58 for an all-new *Star Wars: The High Republic* story by Charles Soule, exclusive to *Star Wars Insider*.

and Keeve is absolutely in awe of her. You've got a Trandoshan Jedi, Sskeer, who's been around seemingly forever and is really grumpy. You have Maru, who meditates through multitasking and is constantly surrounded by datapads lying around him. Then you have a pair of siblings, Terec and Ceret, that share one mind between them. Keeve has to keep up with all these people, and so she struggles completely through all of that. But again, it's all about how the characters work together and the lessons they can learn from each other, including how to be a Jedi in service in the best way.

**You have already mentioned the Nihil as a foe, but are they the only villains your various characters will face?**

**Scott:** The Drengir are a species of sentient carnivorous plant creatures who spore over a certain section of the galaxy, near the frontier where our characters are. Throughout all of this, as we've been saying, the High Republic is our Camelot, and with that we mean both Arthurian Camelot and also 1960s Americana. But obviously, just like in both those eras, they hit problems early on. It's about how these Jedi and the Republic members cope with them.

On one side you've got the Nihil, who are these pirate raiders, and on the other side you've got this creeping horror that no one really understands. Are they just beasts?

***"The High Republic is our Camelot, and with that we mean both Arthurian Camelot and also 1960s Americana."***

*Cavan Scott*

09

We know they're vegetation, but they seem to be spreading throughout the population, through planets. They're popping up here, there and everywhere, and we don't know at first if they are sentient, whether they have a reason to be doing what they're doing. It's seeding, every pun intended, distrust and fear in that frontier at a time where everyone has been saying it's all going to be okay. It's exciting to be dealing with some of the threats that no one even expected.

09 Justina Ireland's *A Test of Courage* is on sale January 6.

**Gray:** One thing that seems great about this mysterious station is that it's so lush with plant life. It's almost like this oasis in the middle of the galaxy. But they don't quite realize that the Drengir are there. The reasons why they don't know that and how the Drengir wound up on that station are all in the final third of the book, so I'm really loath to talk too much about it.

**Soule:** Claudia, that space station sounds super cool. Has that popped up anywhere else?

**Gray:** It has shown up before, so comic readers have already seen it and they may recognize it.

**In conclusion, which two words would you use to describe each of your stories?**

**Soule:** Badass and grand.

**Older:** Dangerous shenanigans.

**Ireland:** Space hijinks.

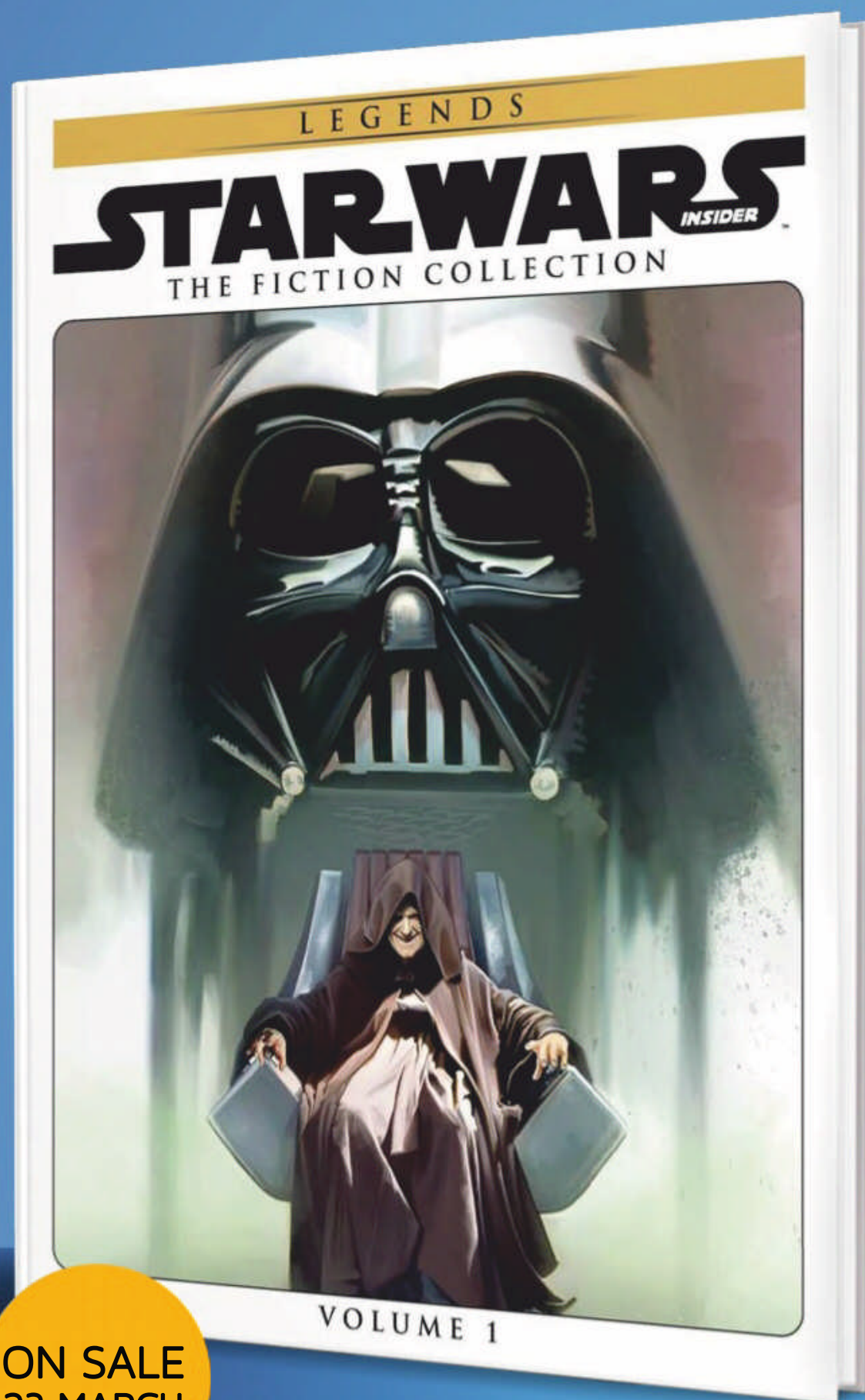
**Gray:** Surprising spacestation.

**Scott:** Epic and personal. 🤖



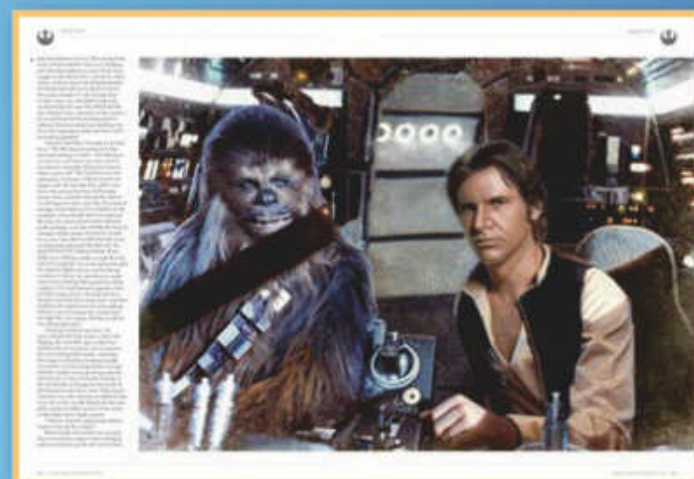
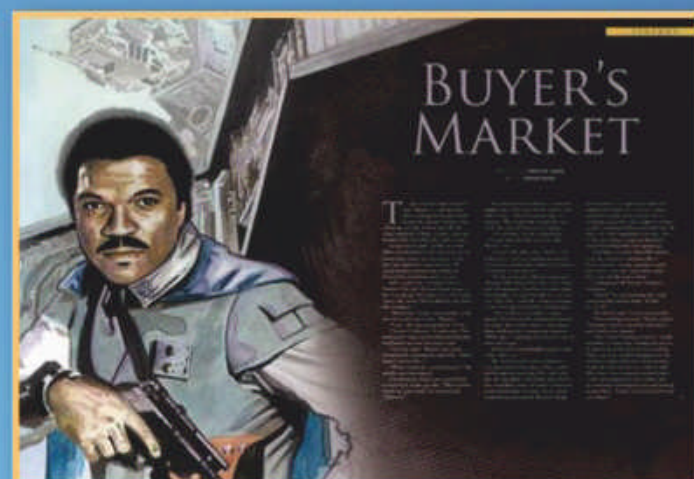


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**THE HIGH REPUBLIC**

STARLIGHT: PART ONE  
**Go Together**

**By Charles Soule**

An all-new tale set during *The High Republic* era,  
exclusive to *Star Wars Insider*.



## The Outer Rim. The *Starlight Beacon*.



Joss Adren lifted a pile of dirty, grease-stained clothes from the floor. He considered, then balled them up and

shoved them in the sack he was using as luggage, atop the clean clothes he'd already thrown in.

He glanced around the bedroom. Nothing else he needed. He always traveled light when working.

"All packed," he said, throwing the sack on the bed, next to several small cases holding his wife's clothes and assorted sundries, packed hours earlier—and he'd bet a hundred credits there wasn't a dirty sock anywhere in them.

"You ready?" Joss asked her, calling into the tiny living room that formed

worked out last-minute bugs in the code, silenced rattling pipes, dealt with coolant leaks.

They'd spent the last few months getting *Starlight Beacon* ready for its formal dedication... but now the last bolt was bolted and the last weld was welded. Even the biological reserves were fully stocked. They felt lonely without the tourists expected to come for a glimpse of the biodiversity of worlds like Mon Cala and Felucia... but they were gorgeous and lush all the same, even the desert biomes.

*Starlight Beacon* was, at last, complete, and Joss and Pikka Adren had played a big part in making that happen. Reason enough to be proud. Joss didn't consider himself overly emotional, but this was a special place—emblematic of all the Galactic Republic could and should be.

But just then, Joss couldn't wait to get the hell off the thing. His wife had planned a vacation for them both, with a surprise destination. Knowing Pikka, it

"I wish," she said.

She lifted the datapad. It displayed energy usage across the entirety of *Starlight Beacon*, power ebbing and flowing along thousands of kilometers of wires and conduits. A web of light in the rough shape of the station—a gigantic central sphere with tower-like extensions at either pole.

"Okay..." Joss said, not understanding.

"Look," Pikka said, and pointed at single, tiny point of data. "That's too high."

Joss squinted at the datapad.

"Hmm," he said. "Yeah. Not by much, though."

"Not by much. But by some. And a minute ago it was half a percent less."

Joss knew what his wife was thinking: they'd been hired to optimize *Starlight Beacon*. While they had done that job, and this little tiny power surge was barely even noticeable, his brilliant wife had noticed it. And now he had too.

He sighed.

## STARLIGHT BEACON WAS A WONDER. JOSS HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT, AND HIS CAREER HAD TAKEN HIM ACROSS HALF THE GALAXY.

the rest of their personal space aboard the *Starlight Beacon*.

It was gorgeously designed—everything on the station was—but space in space would always be at a premium.

"Maybe we can get something to eat before we get out of here," he added.

The canteens on *Starlight Beacon* were excellent, serving dishes from all over the Outer Rim, to showcase the cultures that comprised this far-off edge of the Republic. The principle carried through the whole station; its structure used metallic ores from many different worlds, and housed craftspeople, contractors, and staff from planets throughout the Outer Rim Territories.

*Starlight Beacon* was a wonder. Joss had never seen anything like it, and his career had taken him across half the galaxy.

He and Pikka were project managers, specialists in bringing large-scale construction jobs to completion. They

would be somewhere spectacular.

They had to catch the next ship heading back to Coruscant, and Pikka had made it very clear they couldn't be late. So it was extremely *unclear* why, now that Joss was finally packed and ready, she was completely absorbed in the datapad she was holding, tapping away at its keys, her face screwed up in the focused way he... well, he liked it very much. He was crazy about this woman. It was mostly her mind—she saw the galaxy in a way he didn't, which meant she constantly surprised and delighted him—but he loved her small-but-not delicate body too, and her weird curly hair. Pikka was just... home. No matter where they were, she was home.

"Didn't you tell me that under no circumstances could I make us late?" Joss said.

"Hmm?" Pikka said, not looking up from the datapad.

"What are you reading?" he asked. "A steamy Zeltron novel?"

"Let's go figure it out."

She grinned.

Pikka headed for the door, clearly expecting Joss to follow, the idea that they might be late for their transportation Coreward and the subsequent vacation apparently gone from her mind.

Joss sighed again. His wife did love a puzzle.

\*\*\*

*I love puzzles*, Pikka thought, moving purposefully along a corridor, her attention mostly on the datapad in her hand, though she had that sense of Joss following not too far behind. She always knew when her husband was near—either she felt good, warm and strong, or she didn't. That simple.

It could also just be that he made a lot of noise. Joss was not a small man. It wouldn't surprise her to learn that one of his parents was a reek.



She turned a corner, and almost collided with Shai Tennem, arguably the last person on the station she would want to see. Shai was a Bith, a particularly particular Bith, charged with overseeing *Starlight Beacon's* construction by the Chancellor of the Republic, Lina Soh herself. He was legendary (or notorious) for his incredibly exacting standards. He would find an energy transfer abnormality *quite vexing*, no matter how insignificant.

Even worse—Shai Tennem was not alone. He was leading what looked like a tour group. It snapped together in Pikka's mind—yes, Joss had mentioned this. A number of Republic dignitaries had come to see the finished station a few weeks before it came fully online. She recognized Admiral Kronara, a high-ranking officer in the Republic Defense Coalition. As for the others...

Jedi. In robes of white and gold, with filigree shapes embossed here and there, and holstered lightsabers at their hips or slung across their torsos.

ensuring *Starlight Beacon's* on-time, error-free construction."

"Pleased to meet you," Joss said. He even gave a little wave.

*What is he thinking?* Pikka thought, the datapad in her hand feeling hot.

"Likewise," said the blonde Jedi, smiling. "Thank you for your work. This place is incredible."

"Why don't you join us?" Shai said to Joss. "I'm sure you can offer insights about *Starlight Beacon's* systems our guests would find interesting."

Pikka chanced a glance at her datapad—that small bump in power usage she'd noticed was on its way to becoming a surge. She gritted her teeth.

The Wookiee Jedi was looking at her. He cocked his head.

*Is he reading my mind?* She thought.

"Joss, we should probably go," Pikka said, hoping Joss could read her mind too. "We don't want to be late."

He threw her a quick glance.

"That's right," Joss said, turning to the admiral. "Actually, we're hitching a

ride with you all when you go."

Kronara acknowledged this with a tight nod.

"We're on our way to the hangar now. Joss, was it? I'd get down there soon, or we'll leave without you."

Shai Tennem spoke up.

"That's perfect. Come along with us, you two. Porter droids can bring your things from your quarters."

Pikka's heart rate spiked. She would have to explain the situation right in front of Shai, wouldn't she? In front of these important people, she would have to embarrass herself, and the station administrator. Even worse, *this could actually be a real problem*. They needed to leave, to learn whether this power issue was more than a glitch.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the Wookiee turn to the gray-haired Jedi and murmur quietly in its language. The woman raised a hand.

"Actually, Administrator Tennem,"

the Jedi said, "Shouldn't the Adrens

enjoy their last moments on the

station before they depart? It sounds like they've already done their part for *Starlight Beacon*."

Shai nodded deferentially.

"As you say, Master Assek," he said.

"Right," Pikka said, pulling at Joss' arm. "Nice to meet all of you."

The Jedi parted as they passed. Pikka thought she felt her skin tingle. Probably just her imagination.

They turned a corner, and she showed Joss the datapad.

"It's getting worse," she said, her voice quiet.

Joss looked. He frowned.

"This way," he said, and set off down the corridor.

\*\*\*

Joss kept maps in his head; one reason he was so good at his job. He studied worksites until he had the systems and sub-systems memorized, the way surgeons knew the bodies of their

## PIKKA CHANCED A GLANCE AT HER DATAPAD—THAT SMALL BUMP IN POWER USAGE SHE'D NOTICED WAS ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A SURGE.

A tall human woman with yellow hair, walking alongside a dark-haired man with caramel skin. A curved-skulled, wide-eyed Ithorian. A female Duros. Another human, hair in long, beautiful gray braids, beside a tall, golden-furred Wookiee—Pikka didn't know there *were* any Wookiee Jedi.

Behind closed doors, Joss called them 'space wizards.' Jedi had strange powers and abilities, and Pikka imagined they could probably use that magic to do a lot of harm, if they wanted to. In her experience, powerful people used that power to advance their own interests. But not the Jedi Order. They were good people. Incredibly, unassailably good, dedicated to helping people.

"Ah, Mrs. Adren," Shai said, in his clipped, reedy voice. "Lovely to see you. I'm just showing the Republic emissaries around the station."

Tennem turned to face the Jedi.

"My friends, meet Pikka and Joss Adren. They were instrumental in

ride with you all when you go."

Kronara acknowledged this with a tight nod.

"We're on our way to the hangar now. Joss, was it? I'd get down there soon, or we'll leave without you."

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"Actually, Administrator Tennem," the Jedi said, "Shouldn't the Adrens

patients. *Starlight Beacon* was no exception.

Ever since Pikka showed him the anomalous power reading, his brain had churned through that mental map. He was zeroing in, seeing the station in his head, and it brought him...

Here. Conduit 398-GX14, situated behind an access panel near the entrance to *Starlight's* Jedi temple.

"Just jumped another twenty percent," Pikka said.

Joss frowned. This wasn't quite at 'evacuate the station' level yet, but if it kept building...

He levered off the casing to Conduit 398-GX14, dropped to one knee and peered inside, catching a whiff of hot, overstressed metal. He pushed aside a few bundles of wiring, and immediately saw the problem.

A meter along the conduit, a resistor hub had burned out. It was acting like a dam within the power distributors, not letting energy past, just collecting



it and boosting it. Joss had seen this before—probably a poorly seated wire. Whether originally a mistake by an assembly droid or a technician, one tiny error had created a feedback loop, cycling and building, accelerating.

And this particular conduit was an offshoot that led directly to the main reactor system, which meant...

"We have to fix this *now*," Joss said, matter-of-fact. "It'll short out the whole damn station."

"Can we cut power to this section?" Pikka asked. "Buy some time?"

"We don't have authorization now that our contract's up, and we've only got about thirty seconds before the surge overwhelms the resistor hub. But I can fix this. I know a trick—I can create a temporary circuit to dissipate the energy. We'll be okay."

Joss pulled out one of the spanners he kept in his worksuit pretty much all the time. You never knew when you'd need a spanner. He reached into the conduit... and stopped. He flexed

He put his hand on her arm.

"I'll guide you. I'll feel it when you get to the right spot."

Pikka reached slowly forward into the conduit. Then, suddenly, the slightest impact, transmitted along her arm to his fingertips—she'd found the hub.

"Okay," he said. "There's a little nub at the end of the spanner. Lock onto it, then a twist to the right. Quick, short. Turn it for this long, no more, no less."

He increased the pressure with his index finger for a second and a half, then pulled it away.

"You get it?"

"Yeah," she said.

Joss hoped so. And if it didn't work... well, he was touching her. If the built-up energy discharged into her body, they'd go together.

But they didn't. The corridor felt suddenly still, serene. A sense of a vanished vibration, too subtle to hear until it was no longer there.

"I think I got it," Pikka said.

"We're alive," Joss answered. "The

the Adrens had ever taken.

Pikka was sitting in the hangar bay, finishing an incident report for Shai Tennem about the wiring issue on Starlight Beacon.

She sent it off, then looked up at Joss across the hangar, admiring one of the new Longbeams that were part of the *Third Horizon*'s complement of support vessels. Long, sleek and thin, the Longbeams could serve as passenger or cargo ships, rescue vessels, even mid-size combat craft. Joss was deep in conversation with a member of the deck crew, a blue-skinned Twi'lek. Joss laughed heartily and slapped the man on the shoulder. Pikka smiled. Joss could make friends anywhere.

A siren sounded, and a voice came across the ship's intercom system—focused and steady. She looked up, listening.

"This is Admiral Kronara. We have received a distress signal from the Hetzal system, regarding a system-

## PIKKA FELT THE *THIRD HORIZON* DROP FROM HYPERSPACE. SHE HAD NO IDEA WHAT A 'SYSTEM-WIDE MASS CASUALTY EVENT' COULD EVEN BE.

his fingers, tried elongating his hand, tried... Joss' arms were as big as the rest of him—good for construction work. Good for all kinds of work. Scars on his knuckles could speak to that. But they were bad at fitting inside small electrical conduits.

"It's no good. My arm's too big."

He looked at Pikka. Fifteen seconds now, maybe.

"Give it to me," she said. "Tell me what to do."

He didn't argue. Just handed her the spanner.

"You'll need to do this by feel," Joss said, as his wife knelt and reached her arm into the opening. "But don't touch the conduit walls. You could absorb the charge, electrocute yourself."

Pikka gave him a frustrated look.

"Joss... I don't know what I'm doing. I'm systems. You're the mechanic."

Her voice was steady—anyone but her husband would think Pikka Adren didn't have an ounce of fear in her body.

lights are still on. Both good signs."

Pikka carefully pulled her arm from the conduit. Joss bent to look, and yes, the problem was solved.

He looked at his wife.

"If we'd headed to the hangar like we planned... if you hadn't run that last scan of the station's systems..."

"I know," Pikka said.

She leaned forward and kissed him, a nice hit on his lips, not too long, not too short.

"You're a very lucky man."

She snapped her fingers.

"Come on," she said. "We have a ship to catch."

\*\*\*

The *Third Horizon* was an elegant vessel. An *Emissary*-class cruiser, shining and bright—the epitome of Republic ship design, speeding through hyperspace on its way back to Coruscant. Definitely not the worst ride

wide mass casualty event. We are close enough to divert to offer assistance. Any passengers with piloting, rescue or emergency medical experience willing to aid in the relief effort, please make yourselves known to a crewmember."

The intercom fell silent, and Pikka felt the *Third Horizon* drop from hyperspace. She had no idea what a 'system-wide mass casualty event' could even be. The Republic was at peace. A supernova, maybe? What could possibly...?

The important thing was that 'system-wide' meant billions of lives. No other way to interpret it.

She sensed the telltale presence, turned her head, and there was Joss.

"We have to see if we can help," he said.

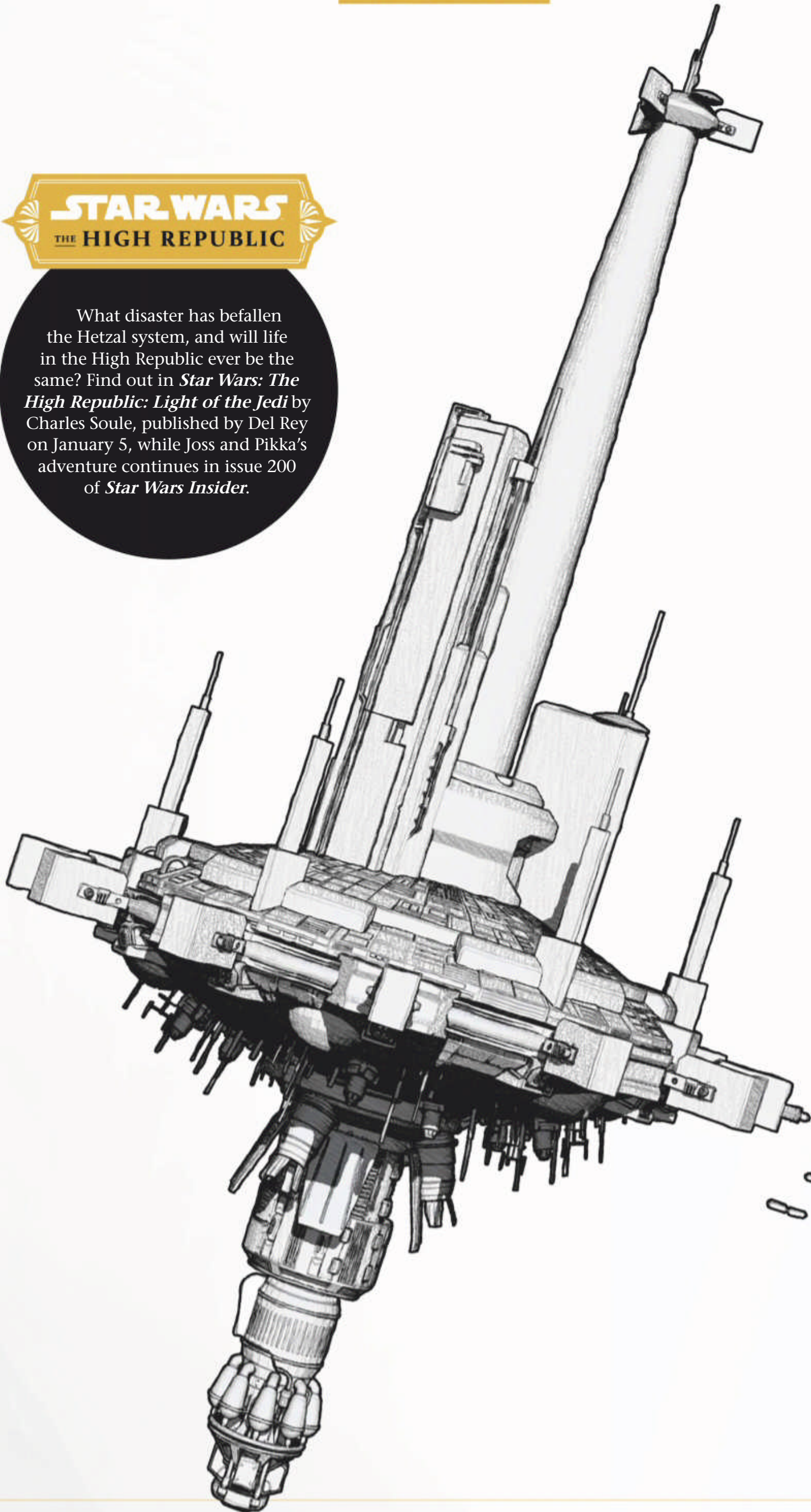
Pikka didn't even try to dissuade him. They could both fly a ship, and they had all sorts of training that could be useful in a crisis. She just nodded.

"I love you," she said. "Let's go..." 🤖



## STAR WARS THE HIGH REPUBLIC

What disaster has befallen the Hetzal system, and will life in the High Republic ever be the same? Find out in *Star Wars: The High Republic: Light of the Jedi* by Charles Soule, published by Del Rey on January 5, while Joss and Pikka's adventure continues in issue 200 of *Star Wars Insider*.



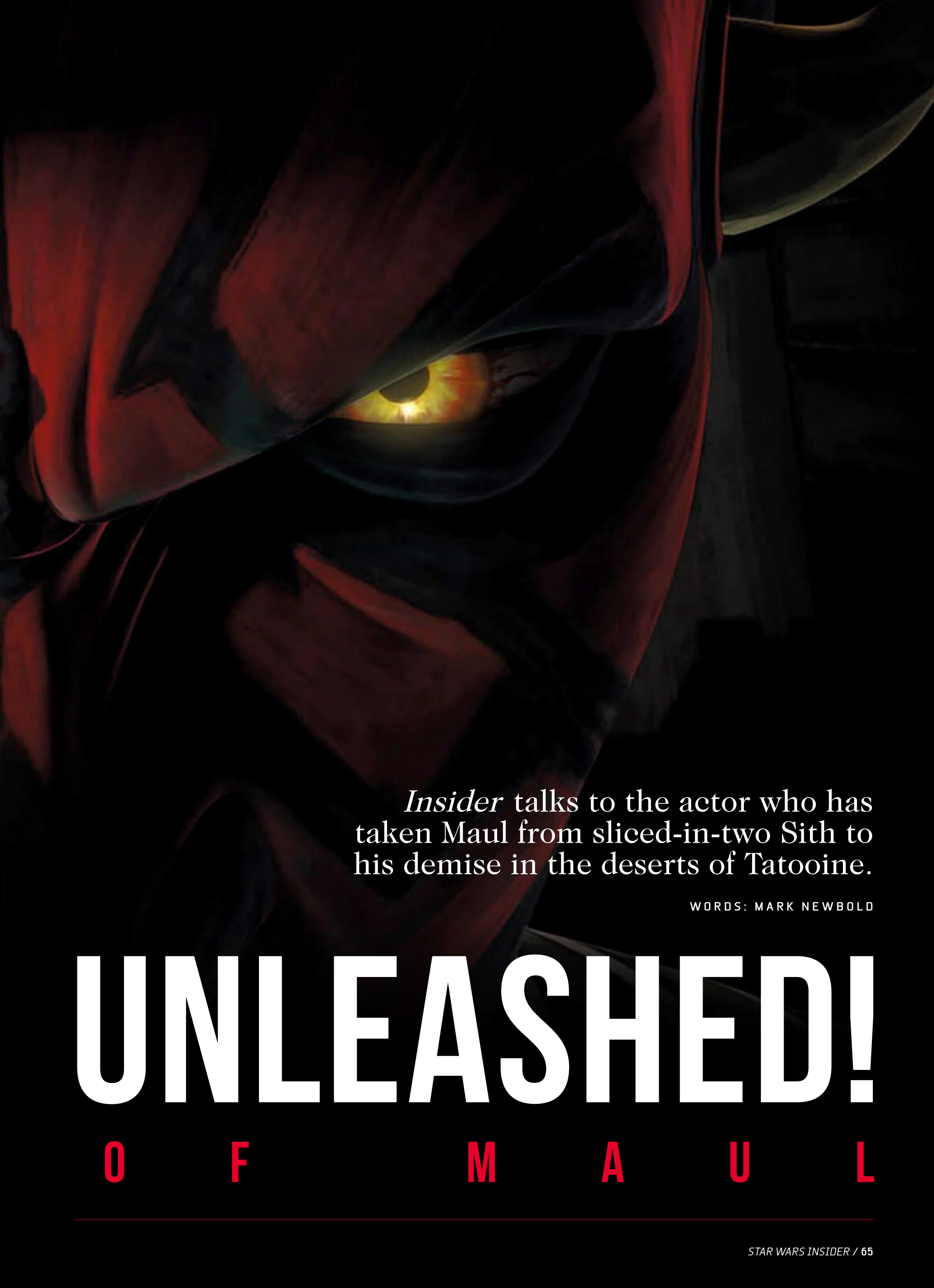




SAM WITWER

THE VOICE





*Insider* talks to the actor who has taken Maul from sliced-in-two Sith to his demise in the deserts of Tatooine.

WORDS: MARK NEWBOLD

# UNLEASHED!

O F M A U L



**Star Wars Insider:**

Was returning to the role of a younger Maul for the final season of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* a challenge, having played an older version of him most recently on *Star Wars Rebels*?

**Sam Witwer:** I had to watch *The Clone Wars* again to reintroduce myself to who Maul was at that time, and refresh myself on how I approached the character years ago, because there's always this need to take the character in new directions. It had to feel like it was *The Clone Wars* Maul, but at the same time we had to do something new with him that we hadn't seen before.

In *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999) he was almost military; then, when you got to *The Clone Wars* he was trying to regain himself, although there was this edge of unpredictability. By *Rebels* he was desperate and volatile; it was as if control had slipped away from him. He was an older guy and he had more of a sense of humor, but he was unhappier. I needed to remind myself that Maul was a little bit more on his game in *The Clone Wars*, so you could sense more control from him.

**For the benefit of those who've not yet caught Season Seven, how would you describe Maul at this point in his journey?**

Maul is a character who is locked

in this spiral, this repeating pattern. Freddie Prinze Jr. (Kanan Jarrus in *Rebels*) liked to call him Sisyphus, the guy in Greek mythology who was cursed to roll the boulder up the hill. Just as he gets the boulder to the top he slips and the boulder rolls to the bottom of the hill, so he must start again. What I think is interesting about the new episodes is that there is a moment in this vicious cycle that Maul's locked into where he tries to think himself out of it. There is a moment where he tries to envision a different destiny for himself; that maybe there's a different way of thinking about things. But how good is Maul at playing with a different rule set than the one he's accustomed to? That's the fun of it. We're respecting his mythology while giving fans some things that are unexpected, that give new perspective on things that you think you already know about this guy and what he's going through.

**How satisfying has it been to play Maul's complete story arc?**

Extremely satisfying. I never would have guessed that I'd be playing this character in so many different mediums for so long. It's been an incredible ride, and I love that we now have a character whose progression you can track through his whole life, all the way from *The Phantom Menace*.

Peter Serafinowicz and Ray

**"I HAD TO REMIND MYSELF THAT MAUL IS A LITTLE BIT MORE ON HIS GAME AT THIS POINT, YOU CAN SENSE A LITTLE BIT MORE CONTROL FROM HIM."**

01

Park gave us a really incredible place to jump off from. Ray is such a great team player. He's been nothing but inviting and encouraging to me throughout this whole journey, and it was great fun to work with him on *Solo: A Star Wars Story* (2018), and on Season Seven of *The Clone Wars*. Ray did a bunch of physical and motion-capture work to inform the movements of the character for these final episodes. I actually visited the studio to watch them shoot that material, which was really thrilling.

**Did watching him help with your vocal performance?**

I feel like it's far more Maul when you can have us both involved. The animators have always done an incredible job for the character, with some wonderful movements and choreography, but when you have Ray Park involved it connects it with Maul's roots. I can't say enough good things about Ray and what he established. Creating an iconic *Star Wars* character is a difficult thing to do, and it was achieved the moment he walked on screen as Darth Maul in *The Phantom Menace*. And Peter Serafinowicz, even though he had

01 Maul's reign on the throne of Mandalor ended in *The Clone Wars* final season.

02 Sam Witwer with Ashely Eckstein (Ahsoka Tano).

03 Ahsoka Tano and Maul face off in the episode, "Old Friends Not Forgotten."

02



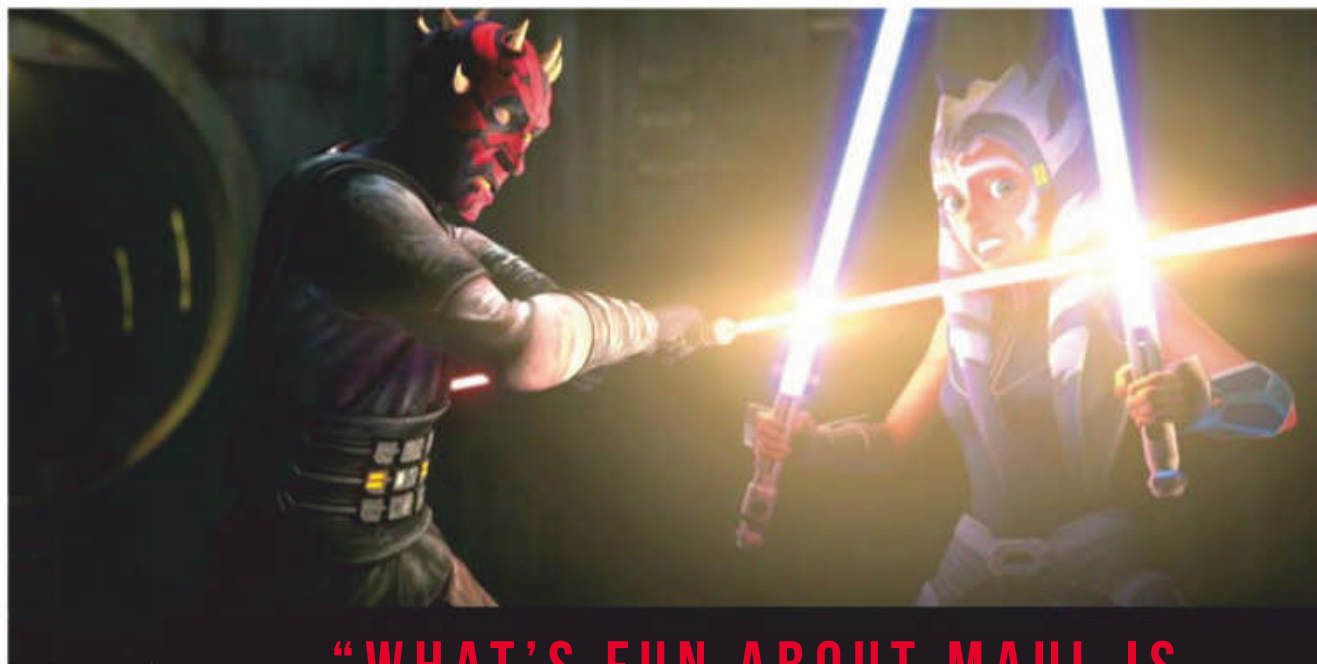




just three lines of dialogue, gave him the perfect voice. When I started on *The Clone Wars*, I felt the need to honor that, at least for the first few episodes. You needed to hear some of what Peter did, then as time went on, I felt increasingly free to do my own thing.

**Do you feel, then, that Maul is a sum of various parts?**

It's always a collaboration, especially with *Star Wars* villains. Take Darth Vader. You've got the Ralph McQuarrie artwork, and then this incredible sculpt by Brian Muir; David Prowse and Bob Anderson in the suit; James Earl Jones's voice and Ben Burtt with the breathing. Then you have Sebastian Shaw, Jake Lloyd, Hayden Christensen, and Matt Lanter as Anakin. There's an entire team of people shading in that character. A *Star Wars* character is bigger than anything any one actor can bring to it. When it comes to Maul, I think of it in exactly the same way. It's my job to help describe this guy's psychology and personality, but let's not forget Dave Filoni, the writers, and Keith Kellog and the animators who have given such great life to him. Let's not discount Joel Aaron lighting the guy



03

**“WHAT’S FUN ABOUT MAUL IS THAT WE’VE ALREADY TAKEN SO MANY BIG RISKS WITH THIS GUY.”**

and giving him the right attitude at the right time. It's Ray Park's face, I only get to borrow it.

**Do you enjoy being part of this character jigsaw?**

Very much so, yes. When it comes to *Star Wars*, this great space fantasy, it's not about you, it's about creating something that will add richness to the overall mythology, and if you love *Star Wars*—which I very much

do—that's enough. If I can sit back and know that I contributed to something, that I helped bring the vision of George Lucas and others to life, that's good enough for me.

When we did the original *Clone Wars*, I always thought the character could live on and someone else could voice him. I never felt it was a foregone conclusion that they would keep coming back to me, so every time it happens, I feel really lucky.





## CODENAME: STARKILLER

Sam Witwer's acting destiny seems inextricably linked with the dark side of the Force. Before becoming the voice of The Son and Maul in *The Clone Wars*, he played Galen Marek—AKA Starkiller, the secret Sith apprentice of Darth Vader—in the videogame *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*.

"It was around the time that *The Clone Wars* first came out that we released *The Force Unleashed*," remembers Witwer. "We were very excited about the game. We felt we were telling a very cool story that honored the prequels and the original trilogy, but it was meant to exist in a sort of parallel *Star Wars* world. If you look at the Force users in the game, they were all amped up to 11."

Indeed, *The Force Unleashed* is famous for its extensive and expanded array of powers available to a fully trained Force user. "It was a kind of tall-tale of the Jedi, because the mechanics of using the Force in the game—like being able to throw 15 stormtroopers over a cliff—were all designed with gaming in mind," Witwer adds. "Like *The Clone Wars*, our art style didn't literally adhere to human proportions. Our characters were stylized for videogames, and so was the Force, but at the time that was supposed to be *Star Wars*. George Lucas had made *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005) and retired, and we thought we were the next exciting chapter. We made our splash and people enjoyed it, while over at Skywalker Ranch they were busy making *The Clone Wars*. I'm happy people still fondly remember Starkiller, and I'm grateful Dave Filoni gave Maul's final scenes in *The Clone Wars* a certain, shall we say, Starkiller quality."



04



05

### Had you followed *The Clone Wars* before joining the show?

I watched it and I was like, "It's for the younger fans. I'm glad they're making it, I don't know if it's entirely for me, but it's great." Then, as the show went on, it slowly evolved into something else. If you're going to grow with your audience and offer them something new, then you have to do that, so while Season One of *The Clone Wars* was made for eight-year-olds, Season Two was made for nine-year-olds, and Season Three for ten-year-olds. By the time they got to Seasons Four and Five, George Lucas and Dave Filoni were making it for the same audience that George had made *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) for, and that's reflected in the show. I became very interested when I noticed that was what was happening.

### It was during Season Three that you first joined the cast.

I was cast as The Son in what is now referred to as The Mortis Trilogy. What I really responded to with *Mortis* was that it was very

04 Maul with Ezra Bridger (Taylor Gray), the young rebel he tried to tempt to the dark side.

05 Maul's fate was revealed in Season Three of *Star Wars Rebels*

clear they were trying brand new stuff with *Star Wars*.

George Lucas is a genius, maverick filmmaker who has done nothing but take giant risks his whole career and put his entire livelihood on the line to make these movies, this mythology. When we were working on the *Mortis* arc, my mind was blown at some of the risks he was taking. Yes, it was an animated show, but an animated show that was going to be put in front of the most discerning fans in the world, and he was going to go off in these exciting directions. Learning about Umbara and the Nightsisters of Dathomir, all this weird, bizarre, experimental stuff, the most thrilling thing for me as a fan was that this guy never wanted to repeat himself. George wanted to take *Star Wars* in new directions, and in doing so he gave it this new life.

There were so many things in *The Clone Wars* that we had never seen in *Star Wars* before, themes and strangeness, and how mysterious the Force became. That was all from George, and Dave Filoni knows how to execute that stuff. When you



watch *Rebels*, you see Dave's take on that same material and it's very respectful of what came before. There are things in there that are so risky and strange, yet somehow Dave makes it work.

He's an extremely talented filmmaker, and I'm really proud of where he's gone. Dave knows how to take risks and go in new directions while not trampling on anything that people love.

**Do those different directions make you nervous as an actor?**

It's nerve-wracking sometimes because you want the fans to like what you're doing, but what's fun about Maul is that we've already taken so many big risks with this guy, like the spider-Maul stuff, which was basically *Star Wars* goes to Hell (*laughs*). If you look back at the visuals and sounds of that storyline and what he was going through, it was pretty much Savage Oppress going to Hell and plucking his dead brother out of there. We did Old Man Maul on Malachor, we did Crimson Dawn, so I feel we're confident now when we take a risk with this character. The fans accepted those weird things, so if we don't do anything new with the character, we've failed them. I think they're hungry for that. I think they want to see the character try new things and work his way out of his own little box.

**Do you think Dave Filoni's work on *The Mandalorian* has changed how he now directs animation?**

It's interesting, I think his live-action experience definitely colored his

06



**"WHAT I REALLY RESPONDED TO ABOUT DOING *MORTIS* WAS THAT IT WAS VERY CLEAR THEY WERE TRYING BRAND NEW STUFF WITH *STAR WARS*."**

perception of how we went forward with our characters in the final season of *The Clone Wars*. When performing Maul for animation, I needed to put a little bit more into his voice. Doing the "film read" for *Solo* was slightly different. I had to pull back a little bit. When we got to these new *The Clone Wars* episodes, Dave felt so confident that everyone knew what we were going for that he asked for the more pared-back Maul style, where the information was more subtly laced in the vocal performance. That created a great tension because Maul became more like a coiled snake who wasn't lashing out at you, at least not at first (*laughs*). I watched Dave directing James

06 Witwer's debut in *The Clone Wars* was as the Son in the Season Three episode "Outlaws."

07 Sam Witwer in character as Maul for *The Clone Wars*.

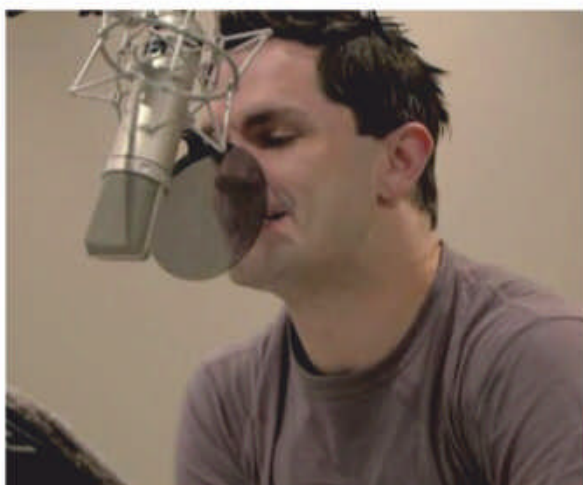
Arnold Taylor (Obi-Wan Kenobi), Matt Lanter (Anakin Skywalker), Dee Bradley Baker (Rex), and Ashley Eckstein (Ahsoka Tano), and those characters—the good guys—are always more colorful and fun to listen to, but what was interesting was that Dave had them pull back and layer in some very film-like subtlety, and in that moment it became so much more cinematic. That was Dave applying what he'd learned from doing the live-action stuff to our show.

**Do you think this final season is a worthy finale to *The Clone Wars*?**

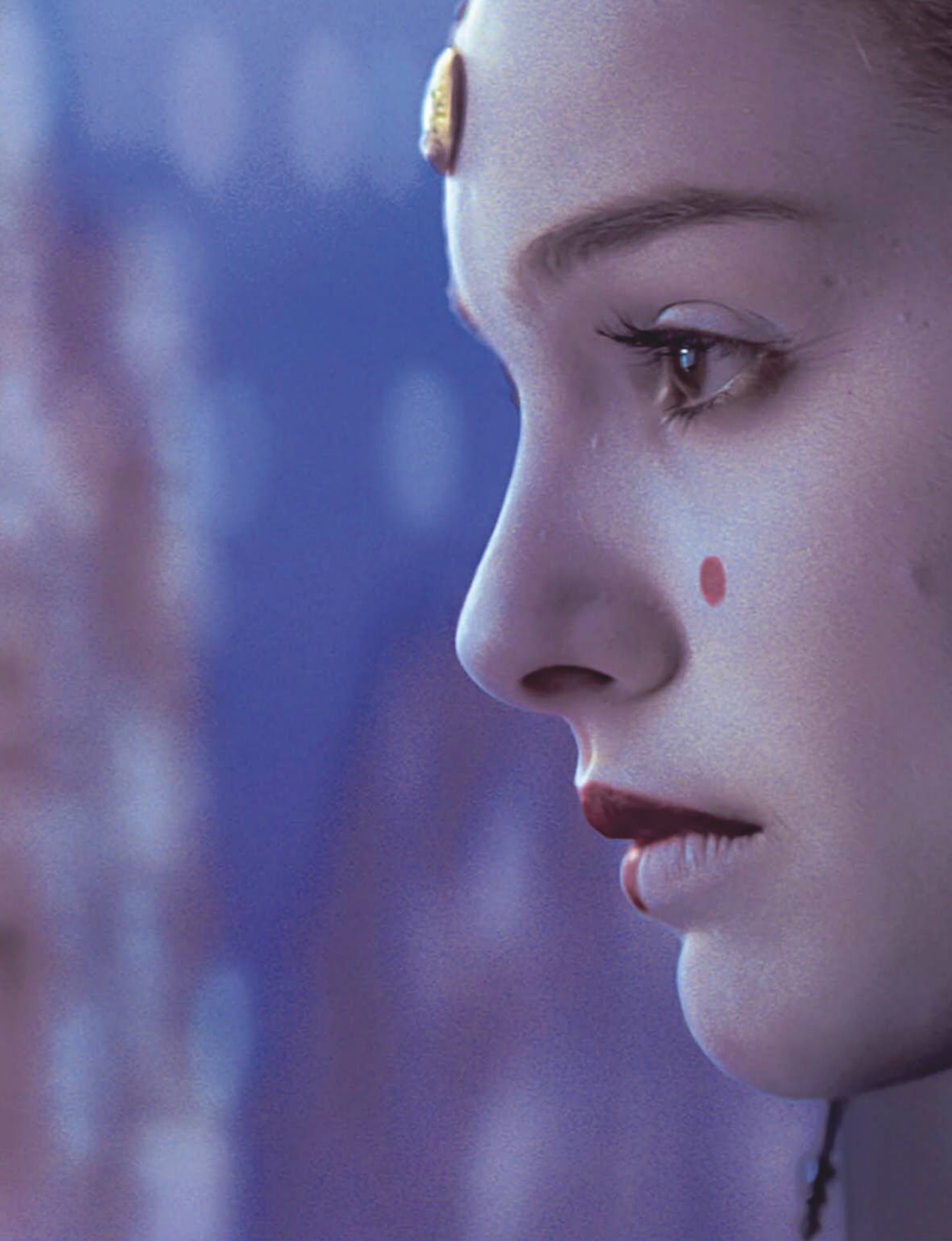
You have to understand, none of us—*none of us*—would have wanted to come back and do something that was a shadow of what we'd done before. Our bar was set at, "How can we make this not only as good as the show that people loved, but *better*?"

Dave talked about that a lot. Every artist working on the show tried to up the visual quality while maintaining that distinctive *Clone Wars* style, and I have never, ever seen the actors work harder than they did in those recording sessions. Dave pushed us further than he ever pushed us before. It was a project that was personally very meaningful to all of us. 🍌

07









# The Perils of Padmé

For E.K. Johnston, relating the adventures of Padmé Amidala in two smash hit novels has been a dream come true. *Star Wars Insider* asks how the author combined galactic and teenage drama through the lens of a galaxy far, far away....

WORDS: JAMES FLOYD

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hat do we really know of Padmé Amidala? She became the Queen of Naboo at 14 years old.

She grew to become a capable and dedicated Republic senator, standing up for its values against those wanting to see it torn apart during the Clone Wars. Before becoming Anakin Skywalker's wife and mother to Luke and Leia, Padmé was an inspiration to an entire galaxy—and to countless fans on planet Earth. But did we ever *really* know her?

Over the course of two novels—2019's *Star Wars: Queen's Shadow* and the 2020 follow-up *Star Wars: Queen's Peril*—author E.K. Johnston sought to explore

every facet of the character while adding greater depth to those who surrounded and supported her. While *Queen's Shadow* revolved around events between *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* (1999) and *Attack of the Clones* (2002), *Queen's Peril* went back in time to reveal an earlier chapter in Padmé's life as she stepped into the role of queen. We also learned more about the girls who became her bodyguards, spies, confidants, and wardrobe attendants—the queen's brave handmaidens.

*Star Wars Insider* spoke to Johnston, who also wrote the *New York Times* bestseller *Star Wars: Ahsoka*, shortly before the new novel was published to find out how *Queen's Peril* adds new layers to Padmé's complex life story. ►

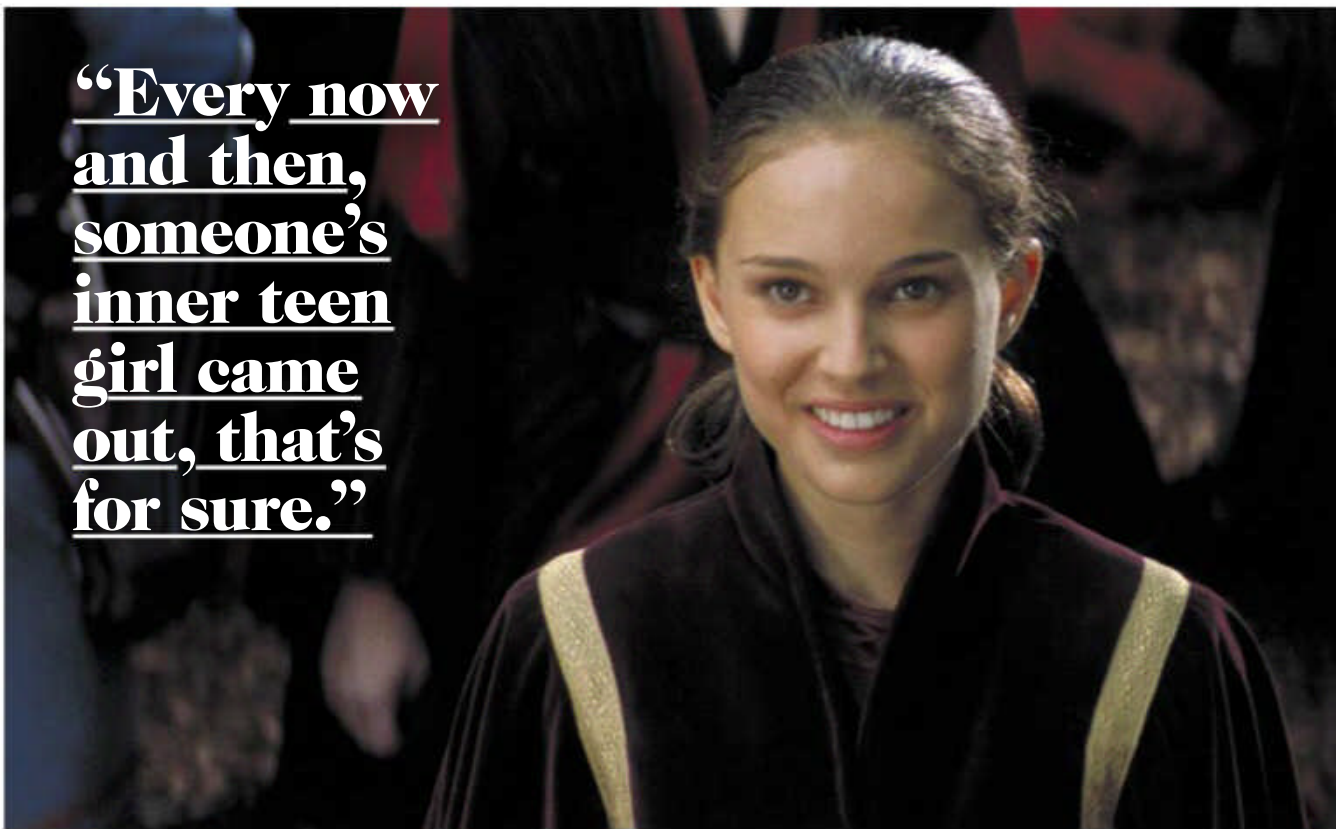


► “The story picks up the morning of Padmé’s election, and she hasn’t even met the girls who will become her handmaidens yet,” the author explains. “The ‘team’ is in a very, very early form. Captain Panaka has a vague plan of what he wants to do to ensure the new queen’s safety, but even he has no idea what’s going to happen once the girls take matters into their own hands. There are definitely some egos in play, as the handmaidens are all pretty self-assured to start off with. It was super fun for me to write each of them as they try to figure each other out,” adds Johnston with a smile.

In *The Phantom Menace*, Sabé was the trusted handmaiden who took on the guise of the queen

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**“Every now and then, someone’s inner teen girl came out, that’s for sure.”**



#### THE QUEEN'S HANDS

Writing about Padmé, both in *Queen's Peril* and earlier in *Queen's Shadow*, were dream projects for Johnston. “It’s no secret that I really, really like these characters,” she shares. Even before she wrote *Ahsoka*, she had Amidala on her mind. “When I put together my shot-in-the-dark proposal for a *Star Wars* Project, it was a trilogy called *The Queen's Hands*. That was in December of 2014, so obviously a few of the plot points have moved around, but I was happy to get most of the highlights into *Queen's Peril*, plus a few extras that I came up with for *Queen's Shadow*.”

to protect Padmé when the Trade Federation mounted their invasion of Naboo, but in *Queen's Peril* Sabé is a character less willing to take center stage. “Sabé was so used to playing second fiddle that she’d stopped seeking the spotlight,” says Johnston, who laid in backstory for each of the handmaidens to further define them as individuals. “Sabé’s general plan was to scam her way through school and then see what happened afterward. Eirtaé had being misunderstood down to a fine art, while Yané was perfectly happy to never be noticed. Saché had given up on waiting for someone to notice her altogether. When the chance to work for the planetary government came along, they all jumped at the opportunity before having quite thought through the landing.”

At various points in the narrative, Johnston took the opportunity to show how Panaka recruited each of the teens, showing up wherever they happened to be to tell them they had useful and unique skills, before offering each of them a job that he couldn’t tell them anything about until they agreed to take it! Despite their varied motivations, they all answered the call. “Honestly, it never occurred

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01 Padmé abandoned her disguise to win the trust of the Gungans in *The Phantom Menace* (1999).

02 The simple handmaidens attire rendered them all-but invisible beside the majesty of the queen.

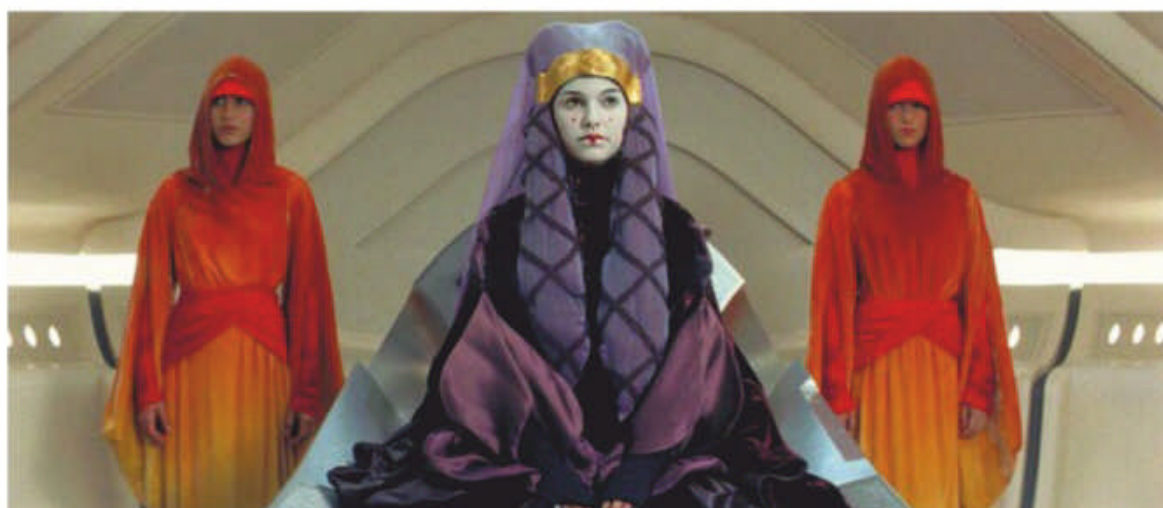
03 The decoy “Queen” with Padmé (Natalie Portman) in disguise.

04 The young queen’s loyal handmaidens were her constant companions.

to them that they couldn’t,” Johnston confides. “Every one of the girls is exceptional, at least a little bit unconventional, and looking for a challenge. They were used to pushing themselves, and this opportunity was irresistible to them, even if they were reluctant to admit it to themselves.”

### More than Decoys

While Captain Panaka was the one who brought the team together, it was up to Padmé to decide how to utilize the newly formed unit, and what she had in mind was quite different from what her security chief had envisioned. More than simply decoys and bodyguards, the group of young women became a Swiss Army knife of talents and skills in service to the queen. But like any team, their personalities had to be balanced. “When it came to getting the girls to work together, I had to walk a fine line between not making everything too full of drama but not making their relationships too easy,” says



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Johnston. “Fortunately, teen girls basically live on that line, 24/7.”

While wrestling with personality clashes, Johnston’s characters also had to work against a political backdrop, which was a mix she enjoyed playing with. “They’re all professionals, so the fun part was keeping the political stuff low key while the personal stuff was all way too much. For better and for worse, Padmé was the perfect model for that. She’s great at doing her job, but as soon as her personal life comes

into play? Well, we’ve all seen those movies,” Johnston laughs.

The handmaidens weren’t the only ones whose differences had a bearing on the story, as Johnston explains. “Padmé was much, much more flexible than Panaka. She was willing to fiddle with the group dynamics and see who shakes out where. Panaka would be infinitely more comfortable if everyone could just be nice and predictable all the time. Their biggest challenge was each other, and their compromise was, eventually, that Padmé would tell him when she was going to try something off-book. By the time the Trade Federation showed up, Padmé trusted the girls with her life, and Panaka trusted them with her life, too.”

**“Every one of the girls is exceptional, at least a little bit unconventional, and looking for a challenge.”**





## QUEEN'S PERIL

DISNEY LUCASFILM PRESS, 2020

When fourteen-year-old Padmé Naberrie wins the election for Queen of Naboo, she takes the name Amidala and leaves her family to rule from the Royal Palace in the capital of Theed. At a time of brewing uncertainty for Naboo and the Galactic Republic, she and her security advisor, Captain Panaka, devise a plan for the queen's safety: the recruitment of multiple handmaidens. These handmaidens will be her aides, confidants, protectors, and even decoys. Each young woman is selected by Panaka for her particular talents, but it is up to Padmé to unite them as a group. Different though they may be, the handmaidens learn to work together in service of the one goal they all share: to protect the queen at all costs. But when their peaceful world is invaded by the ambitious Trade Federation, Queen Amidala and her brave handmaidens will face their greatest test—of themselves and of each other.



## QUEEN'S SHADOW

DISNEY LUCASFILM PRESS, 2019

When Padmé Amidala steps down from her position as Queen of Naboo, she is ready to set aside her title and return to life out of the spotlight. But to her surprise, the new queen asks Padmé to continue serving their people, this time in the Galactic Senate. Padmé is unsure about the new role but cannot turn down the request, especially since, thanks to her dearest friend—and decoy—Sabé, she can be in two places at once. So while Padmé plunges into politics, Sabé sets off on a mission dear to Padmé's heart.

On the glistening capital planet Coruscant, Padmé's new Senate colleagues regard her with curiosity—and with suspicion for her role in ousting the previous chancellor. Posing as a merchant on Tatooine, Sabé has fewer resources than she thought and fewer options than she needs. Together with Padmé's loyal handmaidens, Padmé and Sabé must navigate treacherous politics, adapt to constantly changing landscapes, and forge a new identity beyond the queen's shadow.

► The Trade Federation invasion leads to the queen's adventures on Tatooine and Coruscant, as told in *The Phantom Menace*, but *Queen's Peril* allowed Johnston the opportunity to reveal what was happening on Naboo while she was gone, only hinted at in the movie. In fact, the author was itching to write an off-screen scene with Governor Sio Bibble that would add additional meaning to a key sequence in the film.

"That was so much fun," Johnston enthuses. "The Battle of Naboo is probably one of my favorite parts of *Star Wars* ever, and getting to write about and round out the occupation was a real gift. I love it when the good guys stand up to evil, and I got to do so much of that in this book. As you can imagine, I spent quite a bit of time re-watching *The Phantom Menace* to get details right. I live for those kinds of shenanigans. Ask me about the handmaidens' deployment during the battle sometime, I dare you!" she laughs.

### The Origin Story

When it came to hitting on the right concept for her new Padmé adventure, Johnston struck gold with what seems like an unlikely source of inspiration, coming up with the idea while on a panel at *Star Wars* Celebration Chicago in 2019. "I said I really wanted to send them to a Backstreet Boys concert," laughs the author. "That might sound like a weird reason to write a *Star Wars* book, but there was something about these smart,

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talented girls getting thrown into some awkward social situations where they have to balance their responsibilities, their interpersonal relationships, and hormones. It was just too good an idea to pass up."

Setting the new story prior to the events of *The Phantom Menace* meant that Johnston would have to take the characters she'd fleshed out in *Queen's Shadow* and dial their clocks back several years. How hard was it to dig into the past for each of her handmaidens? Johnston describes the process as, "A little intimidating! I knew where they were all going to end up, once they had decided what they were going

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to be, so I had targets that I needed each of them to hit. Then I just had to convince them to do it. Delving into what made each girl unique and what made her special to the queen's service was a lot of fun."

Besides Padmé's initially difficult working relationship with Captain Panaka, there were new relationship dynamics going on between the queen and her handmaidens, all of whom were new to their roles. They had to get along with each other in close quarters and do their jobs, but "every now and then, someone's inner teen girl came out, that's for sure," says Johnston. "It's a study of contrasts, because on the one hand everyone is highly competent, but on the other it's a disaster waiting to happen. And sometimes actively happening. For Sabé particularly, the decision to be selfless was constant, difficult, but something she'd do in a heartbeat, every time."

### No Ordinary Teen

There are many Young Adult novels with teenage protagonists, but Padmé's situation was quite different from that of an ordinary teen,

05 The queen's handmaidens were involved in pivotal moments in galactic affairs.

06 Queen Padmé Amidala considers her options on the eve of invasion.

## "By the time the Trade Federation showed up, Padmé trusted the girls with her life, and Panaka trusted them with her life, too."

going through a tumultuous period in life while taking on the responsibilities of becoming the queen of an entire planet. "On the bright side, no one was going to tell her she had to eat her vegetables," jokes Johnston. "Young Adult fiction is quite tongue-in-cheek about getting the parents out of the way and allowing the kids to 'Get Up To Things' unsupervised. Being able to do it without orphaning anyone was great."

Talking of parental figures, Padmé had to learn to rely on the judgment of her security chief, Captain Panaka—but she was also the elected queen, ready to lead her planet's government, and this led to a minor power tussle between the two.

"The hard part was pitting Padmé and Panaka against one another without shortchanging

either of them," says Johnston. "They have drastically different approaches to problem solving, but in having them learn to work together I had the opportunity to show natural character growth."

Writing within this period of the *Star Wars* galaxy's history was also a big draw for Johnston, as Episode I holds a very special place in her heart. "The first time I saw *The Phantom Menace*, I was completely overwhelmed," Johnston enthuses. "I thought we were never going to get another *Star Wars*, and then we got it, and it was beautiful. The sets, the costumes, the effects, everything! I've never stopped loving it. I think that's part of what made writing this book so much fun. *The Phantom Menace* was the first *Star Wars* movie that felt like it was mine. And I got to write around it!" 🧡



# STAR WARS INSIDER WORLDWIDE

CELEBRATING THE SAGA



## IN TUNE WITH DUNE

Cosplaying the Mandalorian's trusted ally

**A**s a child, Scarlett Rose was drawn to Princess Leia and insisted that she dress up as the character every Halloween. Rose's parents even allowed her to style her hair after Leia's look in *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) whenever their family went to Disney World. However, as an adult, the fan could not decide which *Star Wars* cosplay she

wanted to pursue, until she saw Cara Dune in action in the Disney+ series *The Mandalorian*. "I knew I had to cosplay her," says Rose. "Not only is the character an amazing and strong individual, Gina Carano is as well."

Collaborating with her friend Amy, Rose set out to construct Cara's distinctive ensemble. The pair tirelessly dedicated themselves to

the effort and showcased their individual skills along the way. While Rose built armor out of EVA foam and painted the pieces, Amy patterned and stitched the project's fine details. "The costume involved everything from foam to upholstery fabrics and cording work," explains Rose. "I couldn't be happier with the result. Working as a team was a wonderful experience where we were both able to learn from each other's strengths."

Carano's portrayal of Dune also motivated Rose to take her cosplay endeavor to the next level. "I was so



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We want to hear from you! Tell us about your *Star Wars* experience. What made you want to become a fan? What have you done in the name of *Star Wars*? Tell us your *Star Wars* story by sending your photos, art, and letters here:

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inspired by the actress, I have actually taken up Jiu Jitsu as well as kick boxing and some mixed martial arts training in addition to my normal fitness routines,” she reveals. “I feel it has really helped me to get into character.” The final product represents a culmination of Rose’s love for *Star Wars*, an alliance with her friend Amy, and admiration for both Cara Dune and Gina Carano. “Having a character that I can truly relate to and identify with will always mean the world to me,” beams Rose. “After all, that is the way.”

# ARTISTS’ ALLEY

Talented *Star Wars* fans share their amazing drawings inspired by the galaxy far, far away....



## 01 “REY FIGHTER” BY UZURI ART

Uzuri’s evocative work of art perfectly encapsulates Rey’s journey from lowly scavenger on Jakku to Resistance hero en route to Exegol. Uzuri completed her portrait of Rey by shading, coloring, and detailing before adding the helmet and background in order to ensure the focus remained on her subject.

“I created this piece to illustrate the determination Rey has, which is one of the many reasons I love her,” says Uzuri. “Her aspirations, in a way, came full circle.”

## 02 “THE ARMORER” BY DELANEY

Drawing inspiration from the musical notes of *The Mandalorian*’s soundtrack and the imagery of Thor’s hammer, Delaney finished an initial sketch before moving on to inking the line art, blocking in the main colors, shading, and adding depth. With an impressive eye for detail, the fan artist included movement in the embers and light reflecting off of The Armorer’s visor and chest. “The Armorer has this inner strength and that just draws me to her,” says Delaney of the artwork’s subject.





## BOUNTY HUNTERS

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## Daisy Ridley & J.J. Abrams

### RISE TO THE OCCASION

As someone who has been a *Star Wars* fan since the age of six, Rick Navarro was elated by the opportunity to attend the Hollywood premiere of *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2019). Cosplaying in the dark attire that Darth Vader wore prior to his fateful duel with Obi-Wan Kenobi on Mustafar, Navarro arrived on the blue carpet in awe of his surroundings.

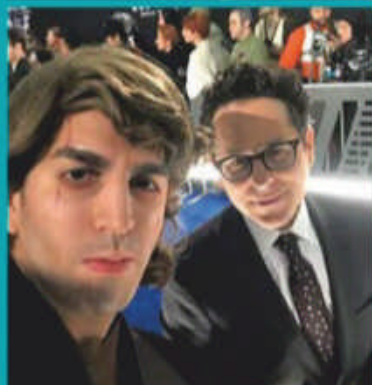
As the event got underway, the fan met a Who's Who of *Star Wars* icons as they greeted the waiting fans, and was more than a little starstruck when he was lucky enough to meet J.J. Abrams, the co-writer and director of *The Rise of Skywalker*. As other fans made their way into the theater for the premiere, Navarro also briefly said hello to Daisy Ridley, who brought Rey to life in the sequel trilogy. "I finally sat down to watch the movie and enjoyed it a hundred times more than I would have if I hadn't just had the experience of a lifetime," says Navarro.

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01 Rick Navarro poses with Daisy Ridley, known for her role as Rey in *The Force Awakens*, *The Last Jedi*, and *The Rise of Skywalker*.

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02 Navarro grabs a photo op with *The Rise of Skywalker*'s director and co-writer J.J. Abrams.

## WORLDWIDE



## FATHER FETT

Finding faith in a galaxy far, far away

An ordained Catholic priest, Father Andrew Kinstetter often fondly recalls how *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002) introduced him to the franchise. In fact, the clergyman frequently relied upon his *Star Wars* fandom to help him through difficult times during his junior high and high school years.

"I saw in all these characters traits that I wished I had myself; courage, moral uprightness, and a sense of community and purpose," the priest recalls. "I even viewed the novels as my friends and would take every opportunity I had to read a chapter or two."

However, Father Andrew felt that making his interest in *Star Wars* public would leave him feeling isolated, until "something happened in my life that changed me forever,"

reveals the fan. "I entered the seminary and began my studies to be a Catholic priest."

As his faith deepened, Father Andrew began to understand his own self-worth. "I have come to realize that my humanity is precious and good, including my love of *Star Wars*," he explains.

From attending conventions to podcasting, Father Andrew has embraced his fandom and rejoiced in the friendships he has forged. In fact, the nickname "Father Fett" was bestowed upon him due to his particular interest in Jango and Boba. "Embracing my love for *Star Wars* is a reclamation of the childlike innocence I lost in junior high and high school," believes Father Andrew. "This is a great saga to be part of as a fan, because it reflects authentic humanity."





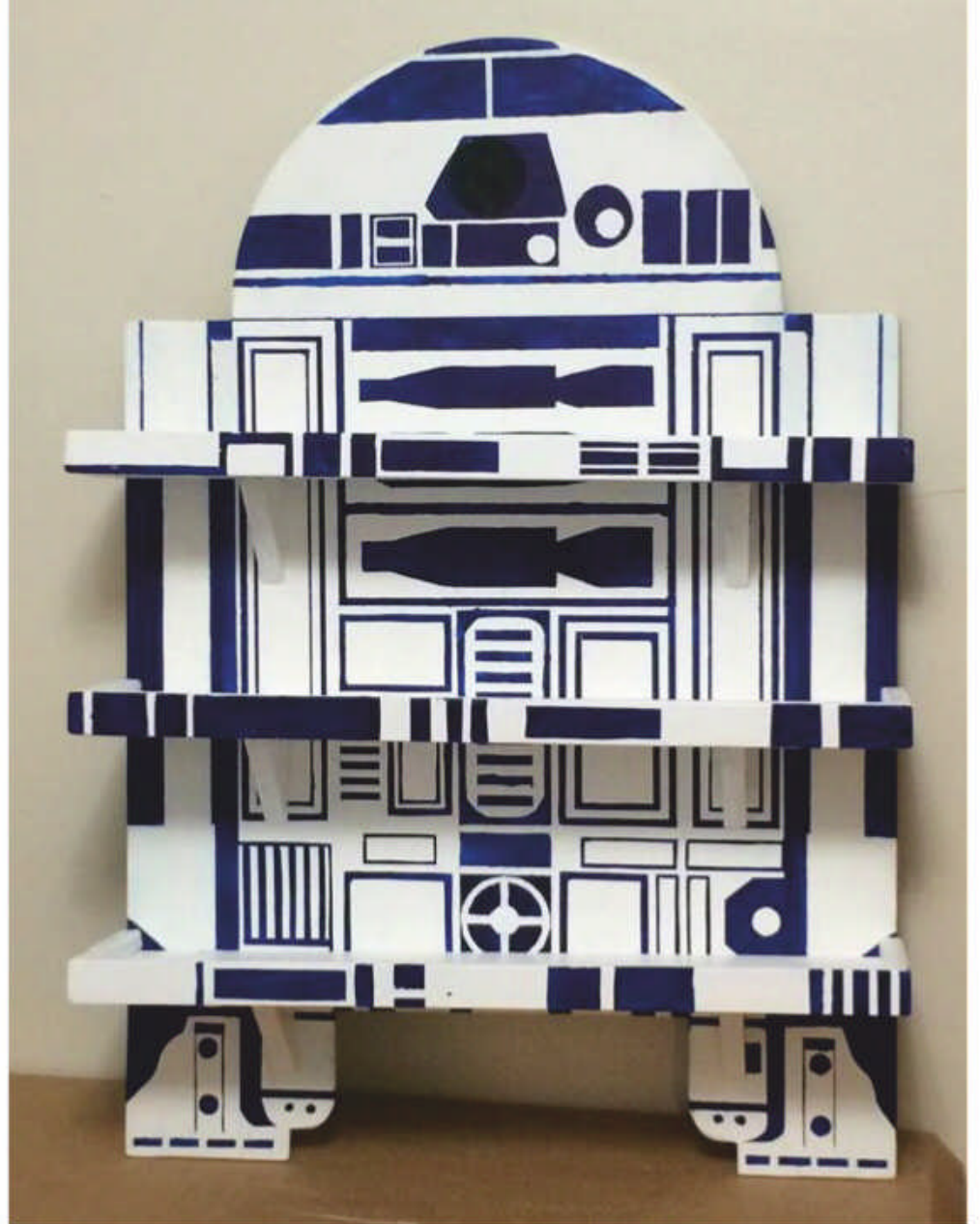
# SHELVING THE GALAXY

Smuggling spices in clever compartments

Ever since he saw *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) at a drive-in theater as a child, Kevin Malenda has been hooked on the saga. From play-acting his favorite characters with his friends to building props and costumes, Malenda's free-time was always filled with the franchise. Fast forward to the present day, and the creative fan maintains a particular affinity for *Star Wars* comics and the lore of the Old Republic.

Upon moving into a small apartment, Malenda realized he needed to conserve space and find a place for his cooking spices, so "the maker" opted to craft a storage solution based on trusty astromech R2-D2. Malenda free-handed the droid's outline and interior details before painting the project and attaching three shelves.

After becoming a collector of Disney Infinity characters and other collectibles, the intrepid builder found he needed yet more shelf space, and set himself a new challenge: to construct a curved storage unit reminiscent of BB-8. Malenda followed a similar process for this second design, opting to mount the BB unit's head onto the front of the body in case he ever wanted to change its position.



"I've also branched out into cosplay," says Malenda, of a new passion inspired in part by his youngest daughter's love for combining her favorite things. Her interest in Darth Vader and Elsa from *Frozen* (2013) prompted the resourceful father to craft a unique helmet and costume, constructed from EVA foam. The astounding result was a fun and very original "Darth Elsa" costume that, thanks to Malenda's enduring personal fandom and endless enthusiasm, helped the pair bond over their shared interests. 🧊





# The *Star Wars* Archive

Lights! Camera! Action!  
Rare images from the  
*Star Wars* photo archives.







Crew members in the Industrial Light & Magic model shop wear protective gear as they work on the miniature of Darth Vader's Super Star Destroyer, the *Executor*, for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980).



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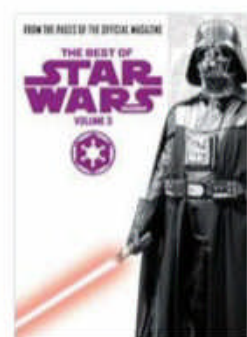
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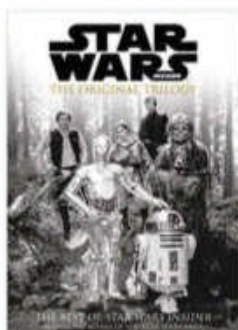
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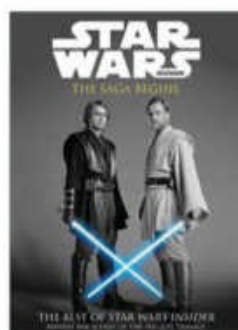
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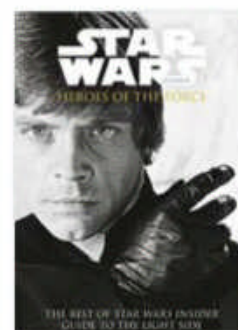
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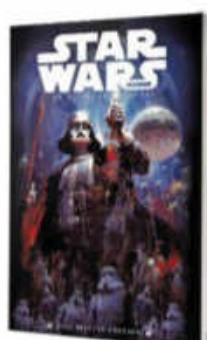
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